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MEDITATIONS

FOR THE

USE OF THE SECULAR CLERGY.

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE

USE OF THE SECULAR CLERGY

FROM THE FRENCH OF

FATHER CHAIGNON, S. J.

BY

RIGHT REV. L. DE GOESBRIAND, D.D.

Bishop of Burlington

IN TWO VOLUMES

Volume I.

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PREFACE.

A book in the English language containing a course of meditations for the use of the *secular* Clergy is very much needed in the United States and elsewhere. The work of which we give a translation was not, however, written by a secular priest; it is the work of a reverend Jesuit Father, who died in 1883 at Angers. But the venerable Father had received of God the special vocation to devote himself to the sanctification of the secular Clergy, with the details of whose life he was perfectly acquainted. Father Chaignon wrote of himself: "Through a merciful and providential disposition, for which we shall be forever thankful, God deigned to make use of us in a great number of pastoral retreats, during more than thirty years, to remind His ministers of the glorious privileges and the grave obligations of the priest and the pastor." It has also been written of Father Chaignon: "Over three hundred retreats, preached with admirable success in nearly every diocese of France, are an evidence of his particular vocation." The learned lecturer has reproduced the substance of his conferences in books which are known and admired by all priests. They constitute a remarkable monument of eloquence and piety, which secures to their author a conspicuous place amongst the most eminent masters of the spiritual life. The idea of the dignity and excellence of the priesthood had taken possession of the whole soul of Father Chaignon, and to communicate it, strong and luminous, to the minds of the Clergy he applied all the resources of his talent and the wealth of his learning.

THE TRANSLATOR.

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INTRODUCTION.

If any one were to ask us the motive of this publication, we would fain answer him by quoting the first words of the preface of one of the works of Father Nouet: "My dear reader, if you are a man of prayer, return thanks to God for this priceless favor; if you are not yet such an one, labor immediately to obtain this great grace."

We shall not repeat to our venerable brother priests what they have so often read and heard concerning the importance of meditation. When there is question of the members of the sacerdotal tribe, it may be said to be, not important merely, but necessary. "Meditation," says Rupert (Lib. 2, in Lev., c. 11), "is recommended to all Christians, but it is commanded to the priests, who, in virtue of their state, are obliged to, and aim at, a high perfection." It is certain, as a rule, that spiritual life is impossible without mental prayer. We shall content ourselves with some short reflections regarding the esteem we should have for this exercise, before we go on to show the plan of this work and the method of meditation we have thought best to adopt.

I.

NECESSITY OF MEDITATION FOR THE PRIEST.

The immense interests which are connected with the sanctification of the clergy absolutely require us to be assiduous in meditating the laws of the Lord, as the Church asked it for us in the ceremony of our consecration: *Ut in lege tua die ac nocte meditantes . . . quod crediderint doceant, quod docuerint imitentur.* (Pont.)

When, in fact, we have priests who have been sanctified, according to the prayer which Jesus Christ addressed for them to His Father, "*Sanctifica eos in veritate*," and who have become able through their eminent virtue worthily to accomplish their heavenly vocation, it may be said that error is opposed with success, that truth is established, that good reigns over the ruins of evil, that God is known, adored, and served—that the world is saved. For,

according to the beautiful thought of St. Isidore of Damietta, the priesthood is like a bridge thrown between the abyss of divine perfections and the abyss of human miseries. It reaches the nature of God by one of its extremities, and the nature of man by the other; it reaches the former to honor Him, and the latter to reform it. *Inter divinam et humanam naturam sacerdotium, velut medium, interjectum est, ut illam colat . . . hanc autem in melius commutet.* (Lib. 3, c. 2.)

The duty of the priest, therefore, is to strive to procure the glory of God and the happiness of human kind; his motto, like that of Jesus Christ, whose reparative work he continues, is pointed out to him in the angelical canticle, "Glory be to God in the highest, and on earth peace." But, who now will suffice for the exigencies of so noble an end? Who will attain so excellent an object, if he is not intimately united to God, if he does not take from Him all his authority, all his influence, all his strength? And, finally, how will he unite himself to God, if not through mental prayer, which holy Doctors call *Deitatis scala, conjunctio hominis cum Deo?*

They have ever remarked a capital difference between the evangelical laborer who applies himself seriously to this fundamental exercise of the interior life, and the priest who performs it negligently. The one speaks with timidity and hesitation; he is a talker who discusses matters; the other speaks boldly, like one who sees or who has seen. The language of the first is destitute of that inspiration, of that vivifying warmth which the spirit of God alone can give; the second is like another Moses coming down from the mountain, with glowing visage, because he had conversed with Him who desired Himself to be called *ignis consumens.* Hence it is that there is in this priest a profound conviction which is noticed and felt by others, not simply in his words, but in all his exterior; hence comes the power, almost irresistible, which he exercises over minds and hearts.

We know how unanimously all agree on this point who have especially devoted their zeal to the sanctification of the clergy. St. Gregory the Great trembles for the bishops who admit to the priesthood men who have neither esteem nor love for mental prayer. St. Bernard exhorts Pope Eugene not to impose hands on any save those who love mental prayer, and who know it better through practice than through speculation. St. Charles Borromeo would ordain no clergyman till he had convinced himself that he had the knowledge of meditation; that he sufficiently knew the parts which compose it, the method to be followed in it, and especially that he was punctual in attending to it. All that has

been said and written on this matter, principally since the days of St. Charles, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Francis de Sales, and Mr. Olier, till our time, may be summed up in this thought: Ordination alone makes the priest; mental prayer alone makes the good priest. Meditation must, therefore, be practiced. But on what subjects? and how should we meditate?

II.

OCCASION OF THIS WORK.

Through a merciful and providential disposition, for which we will be thankful till the moment of our death, God deigned to make use of us in a great number of retreats, during the space of more than thirty years, to recall to the minds of His ministers the glorious privileges and the grave obligations of the priest and of the pastor. In all those reunions, without one exception, the grace of God became a thing so sensible that one must have willed to blind himself not to see the action of the Holy Ghost manifesting His presence in these new cenacles, and the Lord Jesus Christ faithfully accomplishing His promise, "Where there are two or three assembled in My name, there am I in the midst of them." (Matt. xviii. 20.) Having witnessed with great edification the wonderful effects of the word of God when meditated upon in common by those whose mission it is to announce it to the nations, it occurred to our mind that the better way to strengthen and develop those wholesome impressions would be to return often in our daily meditations to the holy truths which produce them.

PLAN AND DIVISION.

Our sacred dogmas are always and everywhere the same. Their wonderful efficacy during pastoral retreats is chiefly due to their connection. During those days, all the truths are connected, as it were, support one another; the one which follows is a complement of that which precedes it; and this one is a preparation for the one which will come next. If isolated, the one from the other, as they are found in the greater part of our books of meditation, they resemble scattered members of the same body of doctrine; they have not that power of cohesion which in retreats gives them so much life and causes them to gain so many victories over souls. The truths considered during the retreats, or

rather the whole system of the sanctification of the priest, according to the admirable plan of the exercises of St. Ignatius, is, then, what in the first place we offer to the meditation of our brother priests. In so doing we have yielded to many repeated entreaties, and have further been encouraged by the kind reception given to our essay on the CELEBRATION OF THE DIVINE SACRIFICE. Next to this we shall give subjects proper to the different seasons, mysteries, and parts of the year. Thus, in our first part our principal guide shall be the recluse of Manresa; and in the second we shall follow the liturgical year.

III.

BOOK OF THE EXERCISES.

It is known that St. Ignatius, in his Book of the Exercises—a book so small as to size, but otherwise so precious; approved, praised, and recommended by so many popes—has, we might say, reduced to an art the conversion of the sinner, and the advancement of the just to the most high and solid perfection. The fundamental principle of it we find in a thought of St. Augustine, which probably had never been read by the converted soldier, deeply conversant as he was with all the secrets of ascetic life. *Est homini iter ad Deum, per Deum Hominem.* Man is a traveler: the starting-point is sin; the end to be reached is God; and the God-Man is the road which leads to it.

Behold three classes of truths perfectly distinct: the first, purify me by teaching me how to fight against and destroy sin in itself and in its causes; the second, lead me on to God, my last end, along the very safe road of the examples of Jesus Christ; the third one, unite me to Him by love. The holy author whom we follow fills up this framework by exercises which he divides in four series or *weeks*, each of which contains an indefinite number of days, and which respond to what is usually termed the purgative, illuminative, and unitive life. We may characterize in the following manner those four weeks or series of meditations. The first week, *Deformata reformat*, it having for its object to destroy the empire of sin, and to reform what there was contrary to order in man; the second, *Reformata conformat*, because at this point Jesus Christ presents Himself as the model, and becomes the *form*, both interior and exterior, of the true Christian; the third, *Conformata confirmat*, because at this time we meditate on the passion of the Saviour, which is very proper to strengthen

the soul in its generous resolutions; finally the fourth week, *Confirmata transformat,* for by applying us to contemplate the Son of God in the state of His glorious life, it tends to transform us in this divine object of our love.

THIS BOOK.

Such also is the sanctification of the priest in its beginnings, its progress, and its consummation. It would, therefore, be quite natural to divide the first part in three sections; but as the third section, which is less practical, would have to be much shorter than the two others, we unite it to the second and we adopt the following division: First section, sanctification of the priest in its beginnings, or truths relating to the first week of the Exercises; second section, sanctification of the priest in its progress and consummation, or truths relating to the last three weeks.

Before undertaking the destruction of sin, one should, according to St. Ignatius, reflect very carefully on the end of man and of creatures. He attaches so much importance to this fundamental meditation[1] that according to him the success of the other meditations depends upon it. We shall, after his example, begin by a certain number of preliminary meditations, which will be calculated to prepare for those which will follow.

In a first paragraph of the first section we shall consider all that concerns the end of man and of the priest, the dignity of the priesthood, its mission, its powers, and principally the sanctity which it demands of us. We shall, however, demonstrate that this sanctity is as easily acquired as it is necessary, owing to the countless and powerful means given us in order to attain it.

CONSIDERATION.

The second paragraph will treat of sin only, and of what generally leads to its commission—namely, the passions. We shall speak in succession of the punishments of sin, of its odious character when it is committed by a priest, its deplorable effects, etc., and these will carry into the soul that spirit of compunction which in our present state is an indispensable preliminary step toward true sanctity.

After studying the nature of sin, considered in the priest, we

[1] It has no other name in the Book of Exercises but *fundamentum principium.*

shall excite ourselves to a sincere detestation of it, by the consideration of the last ends—death, judgment, and hell; and this will be the matter of the third paragraph.

Finally, in the fourth paragraph, the sweet penetrating voice of mercy will be heard in place of the terrible voice of justice. We shall bewail our sins through motives more pure, which shall give more value to our tears. Gratitude and love will complete that which fear had commenced. We shall throw ourselves with confidence in the arms of God our Father, whose inclination is ever to have compassion and to forgive. *Cui proprium est misereri semper et parcere.* We shall endeavor to repair our wrongs in doing worthy fruits of penance, which is the only object of this first section. As to the second section, an introduction will explain its divisions. The reader can now perceive the nature and connection of the holy truths on which we shall meditate. Let us say a word concerning the form or method of the meditations.

IV.

A METHOD OF MEDITATION NECESSARY.

In the practice of meditation we have absolute need of a method which may control our natural inconstancy, the levity of our mind, and the wanderings of our imagination. There exist many such methods full of the spirit of God, and one may choose any one he prefers. We adopt the method of St. Ignatius, but we exhort those who follow another and are pleased with it, not to change it readily. *Ubi spiritus Dei est, ibi libertas.* (2 Cor. iii. 17.)

The Reverend Father Faber, of the Oratory, has examined in his *Progress of the Soul* the different methods of mental prayer transmitted to us by the most approved writers, and reduces them to two, which he designates as the method of St. Ignatius and the method of St. Sulpice. After saying of the first, that it is better adapted to the habits of the contemporaneous spirit, suited to a greater number of persons—that it can be taught as an art; and of the second, that it faithfully retraces the traditions of the ancient fathers and of the saints of the desert—that it answers the wants of those who can not easily follow the method of St. Ignatius, and have no aptitude to what is named affective prayer—he adds that no comparison can be established between the two systems, because the one and the other equally savor of sanctity; because the one and the other have produced saints; and that the use of either is a matter of choice and attrac-

tion. He anticipates and refutes an objection which might be made. "The person," he says, "who casts a first glance over the method of St. Ignatius experiences an impression like unto that of the young cleric who opens the Breviary for the first time. It seems to him at first that he shall never be able to learn how to say it; but the mechanism of it is in reality so simple that he soon becomes familiar with it, so easily are the different parts of it adapted one to another. This system is infinitely more easy than it seems to be."

Far from being obliged to produce all the acts, and to develop for ourselves all the points mentioned in this method, the number of which almost frightens us—we are recommended, on the contrary, to suspend those acts as soon as the soul has found in some consideration the nourishment which it sought, and to entertain as long as we can the sentiments and actions which it called forth.

V.

THE SCIENCE OF MEDITATION.

Orison is a gift of the Spirit of God; it is a science of which this Holy Spirit is the first, or rather the only, veritable Master.[1]

Let us earnestly pray to Him to grant us this gift, which shall be for us the channel of the most precious graces. Let us learn of Him this science, which is so important a part of the science of the saints. *Domine, doce nos orare.* (Luc. i. 11.) He teaches it, says St. Bernard, in acting upon our memory, our intellect, and our will. *Monet, et docet, et movet: monet memoriam, docet rationem, movet voluntatem: suggerendo, instruendo, afficiendo.* (St. B., *Serm. de Pent.*) One could not have more clearly designated the exercises of the *three faculties* in which the method of St. Ignatius precisely consists.

But what have we to do ourselves in order to second this action of the Holy Ghost, and to draw abundant fruit from our meditations? In place of giving the answer ourselves, we shall use the words of Rev. Father Roothan, General of the Society of Jesus, by giving some extracts of his short treatise, *De Ratione Meditandi.*

[1] *Unctio ejus docet vos de omnibus.* (1 Jo. ii. 27.) *Ipse Spiritus postulat pro nobis gemitibus inenarrabilibus.* (Rom. viii. 28.)

PREPARATION OF THE MEDITATION.

1. In his first chapter the author speaks of two kinds of preparation—the remote and the proximate. After saying, with all those who have written on this subject, that the remote preparation consists in removing the obstacles pride, dissimulation, or the desire of appearing to be what we are not, dissipation of mind, all that is sin, or voluntary imperfection; and in employing as *means* the virtues opposed to these obstacles, principally mortification,—he exposes as follows from the Book of the Exercises the directions which regard the proximate preparation:

"In the evening, read or hear with attention the subject of the meditation for the next day, noticing the fruit you might draw from it relating to the state of your soul. After going to bed, go over the subject briefly in your mind. In the morning on waking up, turn your first thoughts to the matter of the meditation. Whilst dressing, continue to think of it and to nourish your soul with sentiments conformable to the subject you are about to meditate upon. Finally, begin the meditation with a calm, recollected mind."

"I shall remain standing" (these are the words of St. Ignatius) "long enough to recite the Lord's Prayer at the distance of one or two steps from the place of the meditation, my mind being lifted up to heaven, and considering how God our Lord is beholding me." We should ask ourselves in whose presence we stand, whom we are about to speak to; and before kneeling represent to ourselves with a vivid faith almighty God, penetrating with His piercing eye the innermost part of our soul. I think it necessary to insist on the first act of the meditation, for it is too often omitted. Many throw themselves down on their knees with a sort of precipitation, without thinking on what they are about to do. Each of these points is extremely important: if faithfully observed, our progress in mental prayer will be rapid; it will be null if no attention is paid to them. "Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not as a man that tempteth God." (Gal. xviii. 23.)

2. The second chapter contains all that is to be done during the meditation, the beginning, the body, the conclusion of the orison.

DURING THE MEDITATION.

Beginning. Three acts introduce us to the exercise: *adoration, preparatory prayer,* and *preludes.* Kneeling down, we profoundly *adore* the divine majesty. In case of incapacity to kneel,

we should supply for this exterior action by greater interior respect. This first act will of itself spring out of our heart, if we first say to ourselves, What am I about to do? Who is the Lord before whom I stand? This remembrance of God's presence and our nothingness will beget in us a detestation of sin, to which we should excite our faith before communicating with Him who is holiness itself. "We ask that all our intentions and all the operations of our soul during this exercise may be purely directed to the praise of the divine majesty." (Book of the Exercises.) Such is the *preparatory prayer*, which never varies. It is an offering and consecration of our whole being to the glory of God during the exercise which we are beginning; it is also the petition for the assistance we need in order to make it profitable. In the third place we have the *preludes*, which are always at least two. The first of these consists in placing under our eyes the object of the meditation; it is commonly named the *composition of the place.* I am, for instance, about to meditate on Jesus Christ on the cross. I imagine that I am on Calvary. I see the Saviour covered with bleeding sores; I hear the sarcasms and blasphemies. This is a powerful means to keep distractions away; we prevent the imagination from wandering by fixing it upon a determinate object. If, however, it should chance to break off, it would suffice, in order to call it back, to place before it the same representation; just as one looks back on the object he was considering with attention when a sudden noise made him turn his head. If such representations do not of themselves and spontaneously come out of the subject, the bare remembrance of the subject will suffice. Finally, if the matter of the meditation be a word of Our Lord Jesus Christ, place yourself in the midst of His disciples in order to gather it from His adorable mouth. We may also imagine that we hear that word as coming down from heaven and as being addressed to us personally.

In the second prelude we ask for grace; not for the grace to meditate well, as in the preparatory prayer, but for a special grace, conformable to the fruit we wish to draw from the meditation. We ask for light and strength; light that we may know, and strength that we may will and do.

Finally, when the subject is a historical fact, we should, according to St. Ignatius, briefly recall it to mind before the two preludes of which we have spoken.

All this beginning or introduction to the meditation should not usually occupy more than four or five minutes.

BODY OF THE MEDITATION.

The body of the meditation immediately follows the preludes and is composed of three parts: the *exercise of the memory,* the *exercise of the intellect,* the *exercise of the will.* We apply in succession these three faculties of the soul to each of the points which have been prepared, unless one alone should furnish sufficient matter for the whole meditation.[1]

I. We exercise the *memory* in recalling the subject to mind as we did in the first preludes, but with two differences: First, in place of recalling to the mind the whole subject, we limit our attention to the matter of the point to be considered; and next, this representation should be more careful and extensive. The subject of our meditation may be, for instance, some sentence of Scripture. It was enough in the *prelude* to consider it as falling from the lips of Our Lord, or as coming down to us from heaven, but here the task of the memory is quite different. We should attentively consider who is the author of this sentence, what is its meaning, attending to the sense of each word. In this manner the memory opens the way to the reflections of the intellect. Likewise, if the subject of the meditation be a fact, I will simply recall to mind the first point; but I shall not do it so briefly as in the first preludes. I will well consider all the circumstances of this fact and examine them carefully, asking of myself the following questions: Who is He who acts? What does He do? Where is the place of the action? What are the means, the end, the manner, the time? *Quis? Quaid? Ubi? Quibus auxiliis? Cur? Quomodo? Quando?*

"This is the more proper time to agitate those questions, since the rôle of the intellect consists principally in drawing by reasoning a practical fruit from all the circumstances naturally considered. The masters of the spiritual life also strongly recommend us to make, as far as possible, acts of faith regarding the truth of the fact on which we meditate; the reflections which follow will thereby be the more solid, and will exert greater force on the will in order to move it and carry it along."

II. Exercise of the *intellect.* The duty of this faculty is to reflect on the truths proposed by the memory, to appropriate

[1] As the masters of spiritual life insist on returning many times to the same subject of meditation, it has seemed to us that in case of these, our meditations, we might adopt the following course, particularly where the meditation lasts only a half hour: Take one point for the first day, or two if there are three; take the balance of the subject on the second day; and on the third day meditate on the whole subject.

them to the actual wants of the soul, to weigh the motives which urge us to work; finally, to consider by the light of the same truths what our conduct was in the past and what it ought to be in the future. The exercise of the intellect should be performed with great simplicity.

A means of giving power to the intellect which may be used by all would be to go over a series of questions easily solved provided we attend to the meditation with a serious, recollected mind. Here are those questions:

1. *Quid de hoc est considerandum?* What do I have to consider in this subject offered to my meditation? Concentrate your attention on some one of the truths contained in this point, for there is often more than one truth contained in one point. Each of them in its turn will become the object of our reflections.

2. *Quæ doctrina practica inde concludenda?* Here, under the impression of the truths of which I have become convinced, I consider what influence it ought to have on my conduct. Let us make on this subject a most important observation, which is, that our conclusions should be precise and determined, and adapted to our present state; for, first of all, a general conclusion remains generally without results. I would fain compare them to cannon shots discharged at random, without aim, incapable of harming the enemy and leveling down his ramparts. In the second place, it suffices not to descend into particulars; each one should, besides, insist on the special conclusion which his case requires, and apply it to such or such matter as is the more ordinary cause of his falls, to such or such obstacle as impedes his progress in the service of God.

3. *Quænam motiva ad conclusionem servandam inducunt?* I know what my obligations are, but what are the motives which solicit me to accomplish them? This I should consider seriously, for this, indeed, is the only means I have to give a solid foundation to the reformation of my life. The will lets itself be guided by the intellect; when the intellect does not sufficiently perceive the reasons which demand this or that determination, the will applies to it without vigor and energy. Now, which are the motives that impel us to shun the ways of vice in order to follow the paths of virtue? They may be classed under these different heads: *Fitness, utility, sweetness, facility, necessity.*

The *fitness* of a thing is its becomingness. What does this becomingness require of me, as man, as Christian, as religious, as priest, as pastor? *Utility* comprises the spiritual advantages promised to the practical truth presented to me. I say to myself, if I make this doctrine the rule of my conduct, the number of

my transgressions will grow smaller; I shall save myself many troubles, diminish my punishment in purgatory; I shall enjoy peace, multiply my merits, draw the blessing of Heaven upon my labors, etc. *Sweetness* is the interior contentment, the joy of the soul, which accompanies the practice of virtue. *Facility* sustains my courage, which is ever ready to become frightened. "My yoke is sweet," said Our Lord, "and My burden is light." For whom? For him who takes it upon himself and, in a manner, places it upon his shoulders. *Necessity.* I place under this head all those imperious reasons which make it a law for me to adopt the practical consequences accepted in meditation, though they should present neither utility nor sweetness, and would appear surrounded with great difficulties. We here mention some of those reasons: If I do not conform to this doctrine, there is no happiness for me, or at least I expose myself to the most serious dangers. I have not the privilege either to accomplish or to admit as I choose that which my conscience acknowledges to be a duty; this I must accomplish necessarily. This motive exercises the greatest influence over our determinations; hence it is important to recollect it in the more difficult circumstances, in those moments when indolence and the fear of difficulties paralyze our energy.

4. *Quomodo hanc doctrinam ego hactenus observavi?* This point is like an examination of conscience, by which we ask ourselves an account of our past conduct regarding the truth which we consider. If our life has been conformable to the teaching of this doctrine, we return thanks to God for it; if it has been contrary to it, we confound ourselves interiorly, and adopt measures for the future. If, however, the testimony of our conscience be favorable to us, let us not accept it without control, for self-love and the inadequate knowledge we have of ourselves can easily deceive us; we are so fond of flattering ourselves with the idea that we make some progress in the practice of virtue! We feel so happy to be satisfied with ourselves.

5. *Quid mihi in posterum faciendum?* This is now the time to provide for the future, to see what reforms, what resolutions the intellect will propose to the acceptation of the will. Here, as in the preceding points, one must descend to particular cases, to those especially in which we foresee greater obstacles, or which occur more often, and to those also which must or may present themselves during this very day.

6. *Quale impedimentum removendum? Quale remedium eligendum?* What is it which hitherto prevented me from following this doctrine? What means will help me to practise it more faith-

fully? To these questions it is not easy to give an absolute answer. The obstacles and the means vary according to the nature of the subject considered in meditation, and, much more still, according to the temper and disposition of him who meditates. Each one should therefore consider in what occasions he generally falls into the faults or transgressions on which he meditates, and examine carefully what is the source and cause of them.

"The general obstacles are three: Pride, sensuality, dissipation of the soul; whence the general means are humility, mortification, and interior recollection. To these may be added the thought of the presence of God; the use of ejaculatory prayers; the recollection of motives the power of which we have discovered in meditation; special attention on ourselves when we are necessarily exposed to occasions which lead us into sin, etc."

III. Application of the *will*. This faculty of our soul has a two-fold office to fulfil. It should excite itself to pious affections and form good resolutions. These are two essential elements of the religious exercise which we name meditation. If they are wanting in your acts, vainly would I try to find in them the character of mental prayer; they would be nothing more than a study, a bare speculation.

Affections. They should cover the whole time of the exercise, or at least be very frequent whilst it goes on, since through them only does meditation become a real prayer. They will vary accordingly as the diversity of the subjects.

As to the form of these affections, all know that art has nothing to do with it. The source of sentiment is the heart, not the mind nor the lips; and when we converse with God there is no need of clothing them in human language: *Hoc negotium*, says St. Augustine, *plus gemitibus quam sermonibus peragitur.*

Resolutions. This second operation of the will is of such importance that a meditation without a firm purpose is nearly always a fruitless meditation. The author of the short treatise which we summarize gives rules full of wisdom on this matter.

1. The proper place to make resolutions is at the end of each consideration, when we remain penetrated with the practical teachings of the subject we have meditated upon. Nothing, of course, should prevent us from determining at once some matter that we will reform, if, in the course of the consideration, the thought of such reform should present itself.

2. Those resolutions should be *practical*—that is, well calculated to sanctify our life.

3. Let them not be universal, but *particular*. We particularize them in two ways: First, by bringing them to bear on a given

point: secondly, by confining them through some special clause, in cases of universal character. "You have said, I suppose, *I will be patient in adversity.* This determination is too general. Strive, therefore, to transform this general will and to confine it. You have two ways of so doing. You can say, *I will be patient in this or that circumstance.* You can say also, *If I have anything to suffer, I will think that it is little compared to the punishment of hell which I have deserved; or I will cheerfully accept it for love of Jesus Christ crucified.* By using either of these suggestions, your resolution will be limited, and will, as a consequence, be an excellent resolution. Perfection would consist in uniting those two methods, and saying, *I will be patient in this or that circumstance, thinking that it is nothing compared to the pains of hell,* . . . for in this manner you find in your resolution itself the motive to be faithful to it."

4. Let our resolutions be *appropriated to our present state.* Let us provide for the present wants, or those which appear to be imminent. Something more is demanded, and this is, that in every meditation for the sake of our spiritual advancement, we prescribe for ourselves some sacrifice to be performed in the course of the day.

5. Resolutions should be *well grounded*—that is, established upon solid motives. This consistency will not be wanting if we have carefully treated the third question mentioned above. *Quænam motiva ad conclusionem servandam inducant?*

6. Our resolutions should be *humble,* accompanied with diffidence of ourselves. The first cause which paralyzes the effect of our resolves is presumption, especially when it exists in souls favored with a certain amount of generosity, and animated with a true desire of serving God; they had sincerely promised in the fervor of their prayer that they would deport themselves in such a manner, at the occurrence of this or that circumstance; and because they are conscious of the powerful motives which determine their purpose, they seem to applaud their perseverance beforehand, and to consider their fall impossible; yet the trial comes, and their courage fails them at once. Why so? Their resolutions had undoubtedly been sincere, but because humility and diffidence of themselves had not presided in their councils, God in His justice and mercy humbled their pride in this manner.

Let us never banish from our heart the fear of our inconsistency and the sentiment of our weakness. Let us rely upon the help of God; and in order to obtain it more surely, let us implore the assistance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of glorious St. Joseph, our holy patrons, our guardian angel, etc.

END, OR CONCLUSION, OF THE MEDITATION.

Here are the principal advices which Father Roothan gives us in his admirable short treatise.

If, as it ordinarily happens, we had taken many resolutions during the meditation, it will be useful to gather them all up, as it were in a cluster, and to confirm them. At least let us not omit the prayer which St. Ignatius designates by the name of *Colloquy*. It may be addressed to God the Father, to Our Lord Jesus Christ the Blessed Virgin Mary, or some saint, according to the subject of the meditation. In order to make it well, let us attend to the following directions:

1. The same should be said of the Colloquy as of the affections. Its value is due to the heart, not to the words.

2. It is in the Colloquy that we should ask for grace to be faithful to our resolutions. We may also here add other prayers, either for ourselves or for other persons.

3. In place of reciting the *Pater* and *Ave*, as is usually done, nothing prevents ending the meditation by another prayer. Many have adopted the pious practice of intercalating the *Anima Christi* between the *Pater* and *Ave*, and it is quite useful when we meditate on the mysteries of Our Lord. If the subject of the meditation has been the Holy Ghost, it is well to end by the *Veni Creator* or the *Veni Sancte Spiritus*. If you have meditated on the blessings of God, the motives to love Him, etc., it is well to repeat the beautiful offering of oneself, *Suscipe Domine*. If you have meditated on the virtues of a saint, you may say the *Oratio* of said saint.

4. Finally, when they recite many vocal prayers, it is useful to intermix them with colloquies. The following is the mode presented by St. Ignatius for the three prayers, *Pater*, *Anima Christi*, *Ave Maria*: First, beseech the Blessed Virgin to ask for you from her adorable Son the grace which you desire, and recite the *Ave*. Secondly, addressing yourself to Jesus Christ, beg of Him, as our soveregin mediator, to ask for you the same grace of His Father, and to grant it Himself, since all power was given Him in heaven and on earth; you will then say the prayer *Anima Christi*. Thirdly, we supplicate the eternal Father, in the name and through the merits of Jesus Christ, not to refuse this grace, and we recite the *Pater*.

It is advisable after the end of the meditation to spend some minutes in asking ourselves an account of the manner in which we made it. If we have reason to be pleased, let us return thanks,

and resolve to act likewise another time. If there has been no success, seek out the cause of it, and resolve to correct the faults that you have noticed, without ever giving way to sadness or discouragement.

VI.

OTHER MODES OF MENTAL PRAYER.

St. Ignatius does not wish his disciple to be restricted to the exercise of *meditation* just now described. He exercises him also to *contemplation*, and in order to give more fixedness to his mind, he exercises him also to what he names the *application of the senses*.

I. *Contemplation*, or manner of meditation on sensible objects. In this exercise, of which the mysteries of Our Lord are the ordinary subject, we consider the persons, hear the words, meditate on the actions, endeavoring to draw some spiritual profit from the one and the other.

Before the contemplation, the same thing should be observed as before the meditation. They, however, add one prelude, as we said before. This prelude, which follows immediately the preparatory prayer, is a sort of representation of the mystery, or of the historical fact which they are about to consider. At this juncture the subject should be considered only in a general, and, as it were, under only one point of view; later on, during the contemplation itself, the soul shall dwell upon each of its parts in order to consider them with profound attention. Thus, when we cast our eyes upon a painting representing different objects, they are all seen in a confused manner, so as to know what the tableau represents; it is only afterward, by fixing our eyes upon each particular object, that we examine them with more care and attention. In the second prelude we represent to ourselves the place in which the mystery was accomplished. The third prelude consists in asking the grace which we desire conformably to the mystery on which we meditate.

During the contemplation we consider: 1st. The persons, with all their good or bad qualities. 2d. Their words, interior and exterior. 3d. The actions, reprehensible or laudable, going back to their cause. Nothing prevents uniting the words and the actions when the subject demands it.

In each of those points we endeavor to draw some spiritual profit by reflecting on ourselves. We may also consider the circumstances of the mysteries, their end, their cause, their effects, the time in which they occurred, and anything else connected

with them which may render the subject or the exercise more fruitful and abundant.

We *end* by one or more colloquies, after which they recite the *Pater*, or any other prayer analogous to the subject.

II. *Application of the senses.* We can, through our imagination, render an object present—behold it, as it were—see it, touch it and taste it. Now, the applying of this faculty of the soul and our five senses to a truth of the faith, as far as it can be done, or to a mystery of Our Lord Jesus Christ, is what we call the *application of the senses.* This exercise, therefore, consists in this—that through our imagination we figure to ourselves that we are hearing words, couching objects, for instance kissing the feet of Our Lord, a thing which should be done with profound reverence. We apply the sense of smell by breathing the perfume exhaled by such or such virtue; the sense of taste, by enjoying its sweetness. It should be the reverse when there is question of a vice. There are so many things that the soul may represent to itself as being sweet or bitter, pleasant or offensive to the smell. This application of the senses should not, however, be entirely separated from all kind of reflection, but it is in this case the principal means to be used in considering the mystery.

There is a marked difference between this exercise and that of mental prayer. This belongs more exclusively to the domain of the intellect; it examines the causes and the effects of the mysteries; it considers with attention therein the attributes of God, as His goodness, His wisdom, His charity. The application of the senses, on the contrary, reasons but little; dwells upon the sensible object, as upon what can be heard and seen. The soul finds therein quiet and peace, and applies itself to draw therefrom the fruit which it desires.

The application of the senses has two advantages: 1st, by fixing the attention of the soul on sensible objects, when it is incapable of penetrating the depth of the mysteries, it disposes it to something more elevated; 2d, the soul already fired with devotion through the contemplation of some sublime mystery, coming down to those objects which strike the senses, finds in them abundance of nourishment and consolation, and then the very smallest things or symbols become for it of priceless value, and supply it with ample matter for spiritual profit.

The exercise is ended like the preceding ones, to which it is often united by way of repetition, so as to make the impressions they produce more profound and durable.

Besides meditation, contemplation, and the application of the senses, St. Ignatius also teaches three different manners of pray-

ing which partake both of vocal and mental prayer. They will be found after this introduction.

We think that one of the great obstacles to the success of mental prayer consists of passing too rapidly from one subject to another without considering thoroughly and giving time for truth to establish itself solidly in the soul. For this reason we nearly always give several meditations on the same subject, and return to it in changing its form, so that it may be considered under all its aspects.

We indicate at the end of the last volume how these meditations may be used in times of retreats, either general or private, and we give the plans of three retreats of six days.

When one has the honor of addressing the depositories of sacred science, he can not invest himself with authorities too imposing. We therefore use the thoughts and even the expressions of the Scriptures and of the Fathers, and do not neglect our best ascetic writers. Those whom we have chiefly consulted are the Rev. Fathers Olier, Tronson, Louis and Peter de Blois, and the Rev. Fathers Nouet, Judde, Bellécius and Martel, S.J.

May our work, with the blessing of Jesus Christ, the eternal Priest, and under the patronage of Mary, the Queen of the clergy, be useful to our venerable brother priests, and obtain for us some share in the merit of their good works, in their prayers and holy sacrifices!

OF DIFFERENT MANNERS OF PRAYING.

FIRST MANNER.

This is less a manner of praying than a spiritual exercise which assists the soul and renders its prayers more agreeable to God. It consists in reflecting on the commandments of God, the capital sins, the three powers of the soul, the five senses of the body, as follows:

1. Before beginning, think a few minutes of what you are about to do.

2. Ask of God grace to know the sins you have committed against His commandments, and to accomplish the obligations of His laws with more fidelity henceforth.

3. Think over, one after another, the commandments of God, and see how you have violated or observed them. Ask pardon for the sins you can recall, and say the *Pater*. It is sufficient to

dwell the length of three *Paters* on each precept; but the length of time must be shortened or prolonged accordingly as the faults are few or numerous on each precept.

4. After having thus run through all the commandments, humble yourself, accuse yourself, ask for grace to observe them better for the future, and end by a colloquy addressed to God, suitable to the state and dispositions in which you find yourself.

If you wish to take for your subject the capital sins, the three powers of the soul, the five senses, etc., you have only to change the matter of the examination; the rest will be the same as for the commandments. Let us observe that the Christian who wishes to imitate Our Lord Jesus Christ in the use of his senses must ask the grace of God the Father to enable him to do so, and glancing at each of his senses, examine how far they approach or depart from his divine model. Before passing from one sense to another, recite a *Pater*. If it is proposed to imitate the Blessed Virgin, we must ask her to obtain this grace from her divine Son, and after the examination of each sense, recite an *Ave*.

SECOND MANNER.

This consists in reciting some vocal prayer and resting successively on the words composing it, as long as we feel inclination and devotion.

1. Before beginning, recollect yourself.

2. Address yourself to the person to whom you are going to pray.

3. Begin the prayer—the *Pater* for example—dwell on the words *Our Father*, meditate on them as long as they furnish you with thoughts, affections, etc., and then pass to the following words, which you will consider in the same manner.

4. When the time comes to conclude, recite the rest of the prayer without stopping, and address yourself in a short prayer to the person to whom you have been praying, to ask the grace or the virtue which you require.

Remarks: (1) All vocal prayers, the *Credo*, the *Salve Regina*, the *Anima Christi*, etc., may be recited in this manner: (2) If one single word of the prayer suffices to occupy the mind and the heart all the time destined to prayer, we must put off to another day the meditation of the rest. The following day we must commence by reciting, without stopping, what was meditated on the day before, and then continue the consideration of the rest of the words of the prayer.

THIRD MANNER.

This consists in pronouncing a vocal prayer, and, if we choose, several prayers successively, only stopping the interval of a breathing between each, thinking either of the sense of the word, or of the dignity of the person to whom we pray, or of our own unworthiness, or of the distance between the two. Let us take the *Ave Maria* for an example.

1. Think of the action you are about to perform.

2. Beginning with *Hail Mary*, think for a moment what these words signify, or of the dignity of the Blessed Virgin Mary whom you salute, or of your miseries which place so great a distance between you and the Mother of God.

3. Then you pronounce the other words, dwelling on each one, as we have said, only the time of a breathing.

The Priest Sanctified by the Practice of Meditation.

BOOK I.

The Sanctification of the Priest in its Beginnings.

SECTION FIRST.

THE END OF MAN, AND OF THE PRIEST. DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

MEDITATION I.

THE END OF MAN.

PREPARATORY PRAYER.—Ask of God that during this meditation all the thoughts of your mind, all the affections of your heart, all the operations of your soul, may turn purely and fully to the glory of His infinite majesty.[1]

FIRST PRELUDE.—Consider almighty God as an immense ocean from which all things come, and to which they return as to their center.

SECOND PRELUDE.—Beseech the Lord to impress your mind with a lively sentiment of the end He had in view in creating you, and to grant you grace to make it the only rule of your life. "Man has been created for this end: to love, adore and serve the Lord his God, and by this means to save his soul." Those words of St. Ignatius are the answer to three questions on which rest all the grandeur, all the duties, all the destinies of man. Which is my principle? Which is my end? What shall be my reward if I fulfil the obligations which result from that principle and from that end?

[1] This preparatory prayer will always be the same.

First Point.—God is my beginning. He is my Creator, my Father. *Man was created.* As I rise in spirit from effect to cause, and go over the long chain of all beings, I reach the first link—God. God before all beings; God the principle. I am who I am. God is the Being, the only being in existence before creation.

How well the soul enters into itself in that eternal solitude wherein it finds God only. What grandeur, what independence, what plenitude of perfections it beholds in Him who has need of no one but Himself. God is *all.* My God and my all. And whilst, before the creation of the world, God, in that eternity of repose and glory, enjoyed His own happiness, He was not unmindful of me; He prepared also mine own. He then disposed the order and connection of graces which were to lead me unto happiness by sanctifying my soul. "He chose us before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy." (Eph. i. 4.) He predestinated me to life, to the Christian religion, to the priesthood, to the heaven of the good priests, if I will profit by His benefits. "*I have loved thee with an everlasting love.*" (Jer. xxxi. 3.)

God has created the world. He has created me preferably to millions of possible beings, which shall never exist; and Thou, O Lord, wouldst not have me ignore the motive of that choice. I have loved Thee. From all eternity I was in Thy mind, in Thy heart. There it was that Thou didst take me, in order to place me amongst the most noble creatures of the universe; "a little less than the angels." (Ps. viii. 6.) And after creating me, Thou maintainest me in existence, as it were, through a continuous act of creation, for Thy action, O my God, is as necessary to the continuation of my existence as it was to its beginning. Should not I, in some respects, be more thankful for my preservation than for my creation? When I was created out of nothing I had not, indeed, done anything deserving of this grace; but I had done nothing to make me positively unworthy of it. But since that time?

Oh, how bright the day begins to dawn in my soul! I now understand the important duties I have to fulfil; but the thought of my omissions fills me with confusion. I owe the whole of myself to God, since I have received all from Him. I owe myself to Him for every moment of my existence; for every such moment of existence was a direct gift of His hand; and now the least of my crimes against that God whom I was so much bound to love, is the crime of having forgotten Him. "Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee." (Deut. xxxii. 18.) I understand the reason why the Prophet

exhorts us to "weep before the Lord that made us." (Ps. xciv. 6.)

Second Point.—My end is God. He who is infinitely wise had an end in view when He created me, as He also has a motive for maintaining my existence. Which is this object? Man was created for this end, to praise the Lord his God. This end is put before my eyes. *This end*—be attentive, O my soul; it is of the utmost importance for thee to know it—this end; to seek solely to attain this end. If thou succeed, thou shalt have accomplished thy destiny. All is done, all is gained, all for me is saved. *The Lord his God*—behold the end of all my faculties. *The Lord*, the absolute Master of all that exists—*God;* God, infinite truth, supreme good—nothing less was wanted by a mind and heart animated by an infinite desire to know and to love. God alone has the right to say to me: Extend thy desires as far as thou wilt, *I* can satisfy them; "open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Ps. lxxx. 11.) This God is mine if I will be His. God, then, is the object which my soul seeks. It came out of His bosom, it asks to re-enter it. It feels itself drawn toward this principle of its life and strength. "My soul has thirsted after the strong living God." (Ps. xli. 3.) My flesh itself, when influenced by the spirit, feels the need of the living God. "My heart and my flesh have rejoiced in the living God." (Ps. lxxxiii. 3.)

But how shall I unite myself to God? By praise, adoration, obedience, and love. *In order to praise, reverence, obey*—such is my proximate end.

This end is necessary. Since I am from God I must live for God; this law is founded upon His nature and upon mine; it is the right, it is the order. It is not necessary that I should be esteemed, beloved. It is not necessary that I should live; but since I am living, it is necessary that I should live for God.

This is a glorious end. I am not created to obey the world, much less was I created to become the slave of my passions. For greater things I was born. Being a noble child of the Most High, I owe my services to Him alone of whom all the servants are kings.

It is the end of my whole self. The domain of God over me is universal; it embraces all times. He always preserves me for Himself. I must always live for Him. He is present in every place; wherever I am, I am from Him, I belong to Him; I must, in consequence, live for Him. His power extends to all that I am, to all that I have, to all that I do. He owns the tree, to Him the fruits must belong, He should have the whole of them, no one can share them with Him. To Him my mind should think, my heart should love, my tongue should speak. To Him

I shall have to give an account of even a useless word. See how comprehensive the obligations. On the other hand, how great the happiness, if I will be faithful.

Third Point.—God is my reward. He will be my salvation—*by this means to save his soul.* To this I will come by serving Him; such is my last end. Blessed end! At last! After the fight, the victory. The voyage shall have been hard, stormy. At last I shall reach port, I shall enjoy happiness in the bosom of my family, within the arms of my Father, of my God, who shall say to me: "I am thy salvation." (Ps. xxxiv. 3) "I am thy reward exceeding great." (Gen. xv. 1.)

I shall be saved. From what evil? O thou reprobate priest cast away from God, explain it to me!

Whatever may be the cost I must save my soul. "What does it profit?" Salvation which I preach to others is the great affair of all men; but how much more important for me than for the laity. In this very life God is the Saviour of His faithful servants. He saves their souls from doubts, their hearts from the tyranny of passions, their consciences from the bitterness of remorse. "Much peace have they that love Thy law." (Ps. cxviii. 165.) "Say to the just man that it is well." (Is. iii. 10.) "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil." (Rom. ii. 9.) If this soul is that of a priest, how much more intense will be his regret. I know what to believe about this. When I wish to find in my past life a time of true happiness, where do I seek for it? Blessed years of my preparation for the priesthood, happy days of my ordination, of my first Mass—how sweet and also how bitter is the remembrance!—"Who will grant me that I might be according to the months past." (Job xxix. 2.) "Behold, they that go far from Thee shall perish. . . . It is good for me to adhere to my God." (Ps. lxxii. 27, 28.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God my beginning. I go up in spirit the long chain of beings; I arrive at God. What is God? "I am who I am." God is the Being, the only one being before creation. I adore Him in that eternity which preceded creation. Already He was thinking of me, already He loved me. "I have loved thee." He created me preferably to millions of others. What rank did He assign to me amongst His creatures? "A little less than the angels." After creating me He preserves my existence. How much love and gratitude did not I owe Him? What

has He received of me? "Thou hast forsaken the God that begot thee, and hast forgotten the Lord that created thee."

Second Point.—God is my end. He had an object in view when He created me. Which is it? "Man was created for this end." This end is put before my eyes. Here is this end: To love his God, to reverence and serve Him. If I fulfil this end, all is saved for me. This end is one only; it is necessary, it is glorious, it is the end of my whole self. The domain of God over me extends to all times, to all places, to all that I am, to all that I do.

Third Point.—God is my reward. As to serve Him is my proximate end, so to possess Him is my last end. My existence is simply begun on earth; it shall be completed in heaven. Oh, how good it is to adhere to God!

MEDITATION II.

REPETITION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRECEDING MEDITATION.

The text of St. Ignatius, "Man was created for this end, to praise the Lord his God, to adore and serve Him, and by this means to save his soul," is but an explanation of this sentence of Ecclesiastes: "Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is all man." (Eccles. xii. 13.) We find therein our origin, our end, our sovereign happiness; is not this the whole man?

Our origin—from God we come; *our end*—to God we return; *our sovereign happiness*—it consists in enjoying God forever. In virtue of my origin I am all from and belong all to Him. In view of my proximate end, I am all for God. If I consider my last end, God is all for me.

Preludes.—As in the first meditation.

First Point.—I belong all to God. He is my beginning, and He has made me what I am. My soul, created after His image, bears the impress of all His perfections. It partakes of His intelligence, liberty, immortality, immensity, etc. O human soul, how great thy excellence! Cease to admire the distance of stars, the extent of the firmament, the brightness of the sun! Rather stand in admiration of thyself. God has hardly anything that He has not shared with thee. O soul more elevated than the heavens, deeper than the abyss, more vast than the universe, more durable than time, more excellent than any visible creature, hold on to thy place; do not demean thyself in placing thy happiness in perishable goods!

If God is my creator, He must be my Lord; if all about me is from Him, all I have is His. The master has a just claim on the work of his servants, the sovereign on the obedience of his subjects, the father on the submission and respect of his children, the workman disposes of his work as he pleases. Now, I, being the creature of God, do belong to Him more strictly than the servant to his master, the subject to his sovereign, the child to his father, the painting to the artist who made it.

Adoration.—"Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power, because Thou hast created all things." (Ap. iv. 11.) "Come let us adore and fall down and weep before the Lord that made us, for He is the Lord our God." (Ps. xciv. 6, 7.)

Thanksgiving and love.—I must believe it, O my God, that Thou hast loved me with an eternal love. In giving me life, Thou hast taken me out of Thy heart, and even now I am carried in Thy hands, supported by Thy paternal goodness. Thou hast preferred me before many others in order to give me life. Was it the prevision of my ingratitude which decided my election? Ah, it seems that it should rather have caused Thee to keep from me Thy benedictions. But now, because I deserved them not, I feel the more grateful for their bestowal.

Sorrow for the past, resolution for the future.—How great my ingratitude has been. In whatever way I consider myself, I find nothing in me which is mine. What would there be left to me were almighty God to withdraw all His gifts? My soul is not mine, my body is not mine; both are a gift of God. All things are Thine, O Lord, because Thou hast created them and maintained them, and I abuse them all to offend Thee. "O God, Thou knowest my foolishness: and my offences are not hidden from Thee." (Ps. lxviii. 6.) O my God, I will be all Thine; no one else will I serve. I am necessarily Thine through the condition of my existence. To Thee, to Thee alone, to Thee forever will I belong. This is my free, deliberate choice. "My Lord and my God." (Joan. xx. 28.)

Second Point.—I am all for God. He created me and preserves me in existence for no other object than that I may honor and serve Him. He is the supreme beauty, and He has given me intelligence that I may know Him; He is infinite goodness, and He has given me a heart to love Him. He is my sovereign Lord, and my faculties of soul and body He has given me that I may render to Him the homage and obedience which are His due. "It is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord,

Father almighty, eternal God." (Preface.) There is assuredly nothing more according to order, nothing more just, than that I should continually apply myself to glorify God, by always conforming myself to His holy will. This is just for all men, but much more just for the priest, who is separated from all other men, and freed from the care of profane things, that he may apply himself wholly to the service of God. There is nothing more worthy of a reasonable soul, nothing more worthy of a Christian soul, and particulary nothing more worthy of the soul of a priest. In this all my dignity and glory consist. They are in a manner God, who have the thoughts of God, His intentions and occupations. If I consider my own interests, nothing can be to me of greater advantage. It is right and salutary.

Admiration and gratitude.—What an honor for me to be all that I am, for Thee alone, O my God! In this Thou hast made me equal to the angels, whose only occupation is to praise Thee in their eternal canticles, and to accomplish Thy holy will. Thou hast associated me to Thy own son who came into this world to glorify Thee; nay, Thou hast, were I permitted to say it, assimilated me to Thyself, who dost and canst do naught but for Thy glory. Ah, how much gratitude and love I owe Him, who has created me for so noble an end.

Regret and good purpose.—How did I serve Thee to this day, O my adorable and sovereign Lord? To Thy honor I should have directed all my intentions, I should have offered the least and lowest of my actions, as the eating and drinking. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do: do all for the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) How many times did not I defraud Thee, at least in part of my most excellent actions? Very seldom did I act purely, solely for Thee, and too often did I act and sin against Thee. Now, I again renew the resolution so often taken, so often violated; all for Thee, O my God, all for Thee alone!

Third Point.—God is all for me. Almighty God in His mercy to us has willed to place our happiness in His service. He might have said to us: When you shall have obeyed Me, you shall have accomplished your duty, you shall suffer no punishment. But behold, He says now: Serve Me and then you shall receive the most magnificent reward. "I shall be thy reward, exceedingly great." This reward, however, refers principally to eternity, but still in this world what does not almighty God do for those who give themselves entirely to Him? He establishes His dwelling in their hearts, He reigns therein, and brings thither with Him that peace which "surpasses all understanding." He protects them, He hears their prayers, anticipates their desires. His provi-

dence watches over them with the same tenderness as a mother over the child, the only object of her love. "You shall be carried at the breasts." (Is. lxvi. 22.) "A hair of your head shall not perish." (Luc. xxi. 18.)

Astonishment and regret.—I hunger for happiness; God alone, I know it, can satisfy that hunger, and I obstinately persevere in seeking out of Him that which I can find in Him alone. Am I going to spend my life in useless attempts? Ah, how much time I have already lost in "loving vanity and seeking after lying!" How many steps out of the way I have already taken! In order to wean me from all created things and to attach myself to Thee, O my God, I, through Thy permission, found away from Thee naught but shame and sorrow. Thanks to Thee for these merciful lessons; why did I not turn them to better profit?

Fear and resolution.—How rash and careless I have been heretofore concerning those all-important interests! What can I expect if, during the few days which I may be spared to live, I make not full reparation for the past? But Thou, O Lord, wilt take compassion on my blindness, Thou wilt forget my faults, Thou wilt not permit that I again may separate myself from Thee, O my sovereign Good. *Adesto mihi, pie Deus, et pone me juxta te, ne incipiam vagari et elongari a summo bono, quod tu es, Domine. Da teipsum mihi, et sufficit animæ meæ; Domine Deus salutis meæ.* (Thomas à Kempis. *In valle lilior.* c. 34.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—I belong all to God. All that I am is from Him; therefore, all that I am is His. I belong more fully to God than the servant to his master, the subject to his sovereign, the child to his father, the painting to the artist. Adoration, thanksgiving, love, sorrow, and good purpose.

Second Point.—I am all for God. He made me what I am; He gave me what I have, for the end that I may reverence and obey Him. Admiration, thanksgiving. How noble my end! It makes me like unto the angels, like unto Jesus Christ the Redeemer, and God Himself, who ever acts for His own glory. Regret for the past. How did I serve Thee heretofore, O my sovereign Lord?

Third Point.—God is all for me. He has willed that I should find my happiness in serving Him; my eternal happiness, my temporal happiness. Wonder. I wish to be happy; I know where to find happiness. Why did I continue so long, so obstinately to seek it where I knew it was not? Fear and good purpose.

MEDITATION III.

MEANS GIVEN TO MAN THAT HE MAY ATTAIN HIS END. NATURAL MEANS.

These are our spiritual and corporal faculties, and also all the creatures of the universe. God drew them out of nothing and preserves them for the only object that they may be helps to man to obtain the end of his creation. "All other beings or objects placed around man on earth have been created for him, to serve as means to assist him in the pursuit of the end for which he was created. (Lib. Ex.)

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the world as the ladder of Jacob, by which you must ascend to God, your last end. The steps of the ladder are all the creatures; God, at the head of the ladder, is saying by way of encouragement, "Come up hither." (Ap. iv. 1.) At the same time He shows you the crown destined for you.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to know in how many different ways you can use the creatures of God for your sanctification; then ask for the wisdom and strength you need in order to use them properly.

First Point.—How created things can assist us in attaining our end. This end is simply to know, love and serve God in this world in order to possess Him eternally in heaven. Now each and every creature, according to its nature, can assist us to obtain that end.

I. *To know God.* The order of the world reveals to me His wisdom. "The heavens show forth the glory of God." (Ps. xviii. 1.) They place in a manner under our eyes His infinite perfections, and principally His power and grandeur. The ocean declares His immensity, the flowers of the field recall His beauty. The existence of the wicked even is a homage to His patience and mercy.

II. *To love God.* It is His goodness which bestows upon me, with such abundance, not only that which I need, but that also which is agreeable and useful to me. His love works for me through each of His creatures. It is He who lights up my eyes through the bright sun: who nourishes me by the fruits of the earth, etc. God became as it were our servant, serving us with so much tenderness and constancy. Ah, what a motive to love Him!

III. *To serve God.* Every one of these creatures serve their creator. (Ps. cxviii.) "The wind and the sea obey Him." (Marc.

iv. 40.) How do they do the will of their Lord? They do it with pleasure. "The stars have given light in their watches and rejoiced." (Bar. iii. 35.) They do it with respect. "He sendeth forth light and it goeth, it obeyeth Him with trembling." (Bar. iii. 33.) They do it with promptness. "Who walketh upon the wings of the winds; who maketh His angels, spirits and ministers a flaming fire." (Ps. ciii. 3, 4.) They do it with an immutable constancy. "By Thy ordinance the day goeth on, for all things serve Thee." (Ps. cxviii. 91.) The sun begins and ends his course precisely at the point Thou hast marked out to him. They do the will of God against their natural inclination. If He will have it so, the most ardent fire will have no heat; the sea will become solid under man's feet; the rivers will ascend toward their source. What a hymn of praise is sung by all nature to Thy glory, O my God! As man, as Christian, but especially as priest, I should have been the soul of that concert; but alas! too often I have myself disturbed it; I have refused to serve Thee. Was it because I was of all others under the strongest obligation to do so?

IV. All creatures assist me in meriting the possession of God, for there is not one that may not be the occasion of some virtue; thus, there are some creatures the use of which is absolutely necessary, those, for example, that are destined to sustain my existence. What occasions for practising temperance and detachment. There are some things to which we must submit, though nature shrinks from them; for instance, sickness, poverty, humiliation, accidents, etc. What occasion to practise patience, humility, resignation, etc. Others there are which would turn our hearts from God, would cause us to offend Him; here is an occasion to practise sacrifice, mortification.

Second Point.—How we should use creatures in order that they may help us to attain our end. "All things," says St. Bernard, "were given us for our good"; but to this they concur in different ways:

I. If there be question of creatures of which the use is necessary, such as food, lodging, garments, sleep, let us be content with what is necessary; take them with thanksgiving, generously renouncing that which is superfluous. Such creatures seem to say to us, "Take, return, fear—take the blessings I offer, give thanks to Him through whom and for whose sake I give them to you; you will in this way return it to Him; yet you must fear, for you shall be judged concerning the use of this gift." We can not help seeing the heaven, the earth, the men amongst whom we live, or hearing a thousand things pleasing or disagreeable; but always and every-

where you will find something to remind you of God. This is what the saints named the finding of God in His creatures.

II. As to those creatures of which the use is left to our choice, as, for instance, the choosing of one kind of life in preference to another, to seek after fortune or fame, or, on the contrary, to despise the same—the rule is to place ourselves, with regard to those matters, in a state of complete indifference, until we have examined them in connection with the service of God and our own eternal destiny, neither desiring nor rejecting any created thing for its sake alone; but solely inasmuch they bring us near or withdraw us from the end of our creation. Nothing can be more just, for God has over us a sovereign, universal dominion. Without this indifference I withdraw myself from His sovereign dominion, by disposing of my affections according to my own will, not according to His. What are the things which lead me to God? Exercises of piety, recollection. These I will practise. What are the things that withdraw me from God or prevent my being all His? Dissipation of mind, voluntary imperfection, any passion of which I am ashamed. Against these I must fight courageously.

I will praise God in the name of His creatures. "O God, how great are Thy works! Thy thoughts are exceedingly deep. The senseless man shall not know, nor will the fool understand, these things." (Ps. xci. 6.) "Bless the Lord, O all ye works of the Lord!" (Dan. iii. 97.)

I will resolve to attach myself to God alone.—God alone, God alone; in my fears, in my desires. "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth?" (Ps. lxii. 3.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—How creatures lead us to our end. They make us know God in revealing to us something of His infinite perfections. They aid us to love Him in unveiling the wonders of His goodness to which we are indebted for all the benefactions of His creatures. They teach us how to serve Him, for they themselves serve Him. They aid us to obtain the possession of Himself in heaven, by helping us to practise the virtues of which He will be the reward in heaven.

Second Point.—What use we should make of created things in order that they may help us to attain our end. If there is question of creatures which we must necessarily use, let us be content with what is necessary, and partake of it with thanksgiving. If there is question of those of which the use is left to our choice, et us remain, in regard to them, with entire indifference, until we

have considered how far they will aid us in the service of God, and the affair of our salvation. I will see God in everything, and adhere to Himself alone.

MEDITATION IV.

MEANS GIVEN TO MAN TO ATTAIN HIS END. SUPERNATURAL MEANS.

1.—*The Graces of God.*
2.—*God Himself.*

First Point.—God gives us His graces. These graces are all the aids which are granted to us, in virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, to lead us to salvation.

Exterior graces. Such are the words of God, the examples of the Saviour and of the saints, the favorable circumstances brought about in the interest of our sanctification—everything outside of ourselves which may withdraw us from evil and lead us to do good.

Interior graces: habitual grace, actual grace, light which illumines the mind, unction which touches the heart; fears, desires, wholesome impressions, all that detaches us from creatures and from ourselves, and unites us to God. "O my soul! didst thou know the gift of God!" Grace is a blessing which far surpasses all the treasures of earth. Of this grace offered to all in so many different forms, I am the dispensator, and God has been too lavish of it toward me. Every day I offer the holy sacrifice, which contains the source of all graces. Every day I take part in religious exercises, which are the ordinary channel of grace; almost at every moment I receive some ray of truth, some holy inspiration. If I had improved the many previous talents which I received, how great would now be my sanctity, how intimate my union with God! But, alas, how little account I made of all Thy mercies! What shall I answer Thee when Thou wilt say, "I called, and you refused?" (Prov. i. 24.) I tremble lest I should be cursed as Saul: "Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected thee." The graces and favors which I destined for thee "I have given to one who is better than thee." (1 Kings, xv. 26.) If thou hast been infidel to grace, tremble when you think of that precious gift passing from Eli to Samuel, from Saul to David, from Judas to St. Matthias, from one of the forty martyrs of Sebastes to that pagan guard engaged in torturing them. I confess it, O my God, I am not now worthy that Thou shouldst

visit me in Thy mercy; but since even "when Thou art angry, Thou wilt remember mercy" (Hab. iii. 2), speak to me once more, I beseech Thee; Thy servant listeneth with a docile heart. "Speak, O Lord, for Thy servant heareth." (1 Kings, iii. 9.)

Second Point.—God gives Himself. God's liberality toward us has truly been excessive. Not satisfied with giving us angels to be our guardians, and His innumerable creatures to be our servants, He who is our end would also become the means to attain that end. "God has so loved the world that He gave us His only-begotten Son." (Joan. iii. 16.) This adorable Son has given Himself, and this gift, which is above every gift, He has given to mankind in order to make easy for us the work of our salvation. "He has loved me and given Himself for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Jesus being with us, what is there wanting to us that we may save our souls? "O unspeakable mercy! The Father says to me: 'Behold My Son! take Him, I give Him to thee; offer Him to Me instead of thyself.' The Son says to me: 'Take Me, offer Me to My Father, and render to Him what thou owest to Him.'" (St. Anselm.)

Without Jesus Christ what would be the value of our adoration, thanksgiving, prayers, and satisfactions? But when I unite my intention to that of Jesus Christ, my affections to His affections, my poor penances to His infinite satisfactions; the expressions of my love and reverence to those which he offers Himself to His Father in His own name and in the name of all His members; when I unite my prayer to His prayer, the voice of my contrite heart to the voice of His sacred blood—then, O Father of Jesus and my own, then I fear not that Thou wilt reject my homages or not hearken to my prayers. Oh, how I love to cover my pride with the humility of my Saviour, my violations of the divine law with His obedience, my defilements with His sanctity, my wicked life with His adorable life; and thus, O my God, I can offer to Thee adequate compensations, notwithstanding my great unworthiness; I need only have recourse to Thy well-beloved Son, Thy worthy and perfect servant, for I find in Him all that is wanting to me.

Sentiments of admiration, gratitude, confidence: Resolve to hear with attention, and generously follow the inspirations of divine grace, to unite yourself to the intentions and actions of Our Lord Jesus Christ. "*Domine, in unione illius intentionis.*" The altar is the place where Jesus Christ speaks to the hearts of His ministers; there He contracts with them the most intimate union, and teaches them to live His own life. Oh, what a stride toward eternal and sovereign happiness is one Mass worthily celebrated!

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God gives us His graces. These are all the aids which are granted us in view of the merits of Jesus Christ to facilitate the work of our sanctification and salvation. Interior graces, exterior graces. O my soul, didst thou know the gift of God. Regret for past infidelities.

Second Point.—God gives Himself. He who is our end, would also become the means to attain it. O mercy unspeakable! The Father says to me: "Take My Son, I give Him to thee; offer Him instead of thyself." The Son says to me: "Take Me; offer Me to My Father, and return to Him what thou owest His goodness." Admiration, gratitude, confidence, resolution.

MEDITATION V.

REPETITION OF THE TWO PRECEDING ON THE WORDS OF ST. PAUL.

"All things are yours, whether it be Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; for all are yours, and you are Christ's." (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.)

These words of St. Paul show that there are in the Christian the most glorious royalty, the most noble servitude, but also that he himself belongs to Jesus Christ.

First Point.—All things are mine. When God adopted me at the baptismal font, He conferred upon me the investiture of an admirable royalty, saying to me through the great apostle: My son, all things are thine; and at his words my eyes, enlightened by faith, behold an immense horizon expanding before them.

From the instant that I became the son of God, all things became mine. First of all, the Church represented by the apostolic missionaries, whether Paul, or Apollo, or Cephas, the Church is mine. The Church with the splendor of its mysteries, the living waters of its sacraments, the legions of its witnesses, protectors, and models; the Church with its treasure of graces really inexhaustible. St. Paul, filled with gratitude, appropriated to himself the redemption of Jesus Christ, who "had loved him" and "given Himself up for him." The same thing I can say of the Catholic Church. The labors of the apostles and of their successors, their lives, their deaths—all that belongs to the Church—is mine. All the means of sanctification which it can dispense are mine quite as much as the light and dew from heaven. Woe to me if I know not how to turn them to advantage! Let the ungrateful soul

tremble at the following words: "The earth that drinketh in the rain which cometh often upon it, but bringeth forth thorns and briers, is reprobate, and very near unto a curse, whose end is to be burnt." (Heb. vi. 7, 8.)

But while the Church is mine, the world belongs to the Church, and as a consequence the world is mine. "Whether the world." This subject I have already considered. I fancy I hear the voices of innumerable creatures calling upon me to love my God. Oh, how they "groan and bewail" in pain, when I do violence to their nature, turning them away from their end, and using as a means to offend God that which is given to me as an aid to serve Him. (Rom. viii.)

Life is mine. Life with all its vicissitudes, its sorrows, its joys, its fair and dark days, its trials and its consolations. "To them who love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. viii. 28.) This life is mine which the Son of God brought upon earth. "I am come that they may have life, and may have it more abundantly." (Joan. x. 10.) Is He not Himself the life? "I am the life." Now, Jesus is mine; His Father gave Him to me; He gave Himself, and does now give Himself to me every day as the living bread, the principle of life.

Finally, death belongs to me—"or life or death." I can not, it is true, avoid it; but I can place myself in such a condition that far from fearing it, I may even desire it. "Having a desire to be dissolved." (Phi. i. 23.) Since the day that my Saviour overcame it, I can easily make death my servant, and draw from its presence the greatest advantages; I can force it to open the gate of my prison and introduce me into heaven.

All, therefore, are mine; "things present and things to come." The blessings which I now enjoy are a pledge of those which He has prepared for me. "I believe and I hope to see the good things of the Lord in the land of the living." (Ps. xxvi. 13.) I shall reign with Him as long as Himself. Oh, blessed royalty! Yet, before I obtain it, Jesus must reign over me, but this reign is a blessed servitude.

Second Point.—I belong to Jesus Christ. St. Thomas defines the Christian: "He is a Christian who belongs to Jesus Christ." I belong to Jesus Christ because I was purchased by His sufferings and His death. He has acquired possession of my whole being in sacrificing Himself all for me. "He gave Himself up for me." (Gal. ii. 20.) Surely I am not mine. Oh, how dearly my Redeemer has paid for my ransom! "You are not your own, for you are bought with a great price." (1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.)

After redeeming me by His death, He took possession of me

through holy Baptism. At the time of my spiritual regeneration I was marked with the seal of His Holy Spirit unto the day of the resurrection. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Eph. iv. 30.) It is the same as if he had said on that occasion, "This creature is mine, let it be faithful; I shall raise it up in glory when I will gather around me all the elect." I therefore belong to Jesus Christ in order to serve Him, to be wholly by Him and with Him in His Father's service. When He paid for my ransom and incorporated me to Himself by Baptism, He willed to have one more human intellect to contemplate His adorable Father, one more human will to bow down before Him, one more human heart to love Him, one mouth more to sing His praises forevermore.

I belong to Jesus Christ! What a glory! St. Paul found nothing to be compared with it. To be the servant of so great a master was his title of nobility; he takes pride in telling it: "Paul, the servant of Jesus Christ." But I should not forget it. Nobility imposes the obligations of a noble life. In order to belong to Jesus Christ, I must necessarily live His life, be animated with His spirit. "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom. viii. 9.)

How consoling to be able to say to God in all sincerity, "I am Thine." That word, according to St. Ambrose, is truly apostolical. He alone can say that he belongs to Jesus Christ who, like the Apostle, has left all things to follow Him. "The men of the world have as many masters as they have passions. Immodesty comes and says to them, You are mine, because you covet sensual pleasures. Covetousness says, You are mine; the gold and silver which you possess are the price of your liberty. All the vices come, and they say, You are mine. In order to belong fully to Jesus Christ you must be disengaged from all forbidden attachments, and in all your conduct act as a servant of that adorable Master."

I am Thine, O Jesus! How delightful it is to think on it. I am Thine. This explains the paternal care of Thy providence toward me; on this I found the hope of my salvation. Shall it be said that I was lost in Thy very hands? No, this shall not be, and in saving me Thou shalt save Thy property. I am Thine; save Thou me.

I am now confused as I remember that so many times I dared dispose of myself, regardless of Thy sacred incontestable right, having used my mind, my heart, my body, my health, my time, as if all these were my own. And yet, my God, what kind of use did I make of them?

Regret for the past. New consecration, new offering of our whole selves to Jesus Christ. Resolve to strive energetically against anything that might separate you from Him.

Who will separate us from the charity of Christ? During Mass attend particularly to this prayer which immediately precedes communion: *Et a te nunquam separari permittas.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—All things are mine. The Church, her ministers, her sacraments, and all these things, because I am a Christian, are mine, quite as truly as the light and dew of heaven are mine, because I am a man. The Church is mine, the world belongs to the Church, and therefore the world and all its creatures are mine.

Second Point.—I belong to Jesus Christ. I was bought by His sufferings and His death. In paying for my ransom He would have one more created intellect to contemplate His Father, one more human will to bow down before Him, one more human heart to love Him. I am Thine, O Lord Jesus! How noble this servitude! How consoling a thought! I now understand the paternal care of Thy providence toward me.

I am now confused as I remember that so many times I dared dispose of myself, of my health, of my time, regardless of Thy sacred incontestable dominion over me. Regret. New offering of ourselves to Jesus Christ. *Suscipe, Domine.*

MEDITATION VI.

THE END OF THE PRIEST COMPARED TO THAT OF MAN.

"You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and have appointed you, that you should go and should bring forth fruit." (Joan. xv. 16.) Let us compare this text with that of St. Ignatius, "Man was created," and we will understand how the end of man is like that of the priest, and how it differs from it.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ, the eternal Priest, who offers you to His Father, asking that you be admitted to a participation of His own priesthood; and God the Father, who accepts you, saying to you as He did to His beloved Son, Thou art a priest forever.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to understand the sublimity of that divine vocation, and for strength to fulfil it.

First Point.—Man did not create himself. He is the work of God's power and goodness. "Man was created." The priest

owes his election to a particular mercy of God. "I have chosen you." My elevation to the priesthood is the work of God's predilection quite as much as the act of my creation. In giving me life, He preferred me to millions of beings whose existence was possible, but which will never be realized; but in raising me to the rank of His ministers, He preferred me to millions of men and of Christians. "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you." In order to make me a man, He took me out of nothing; in order to make me a priest, He took me out of the world. "I choose you out of the world"; out of this "world which is all seated in wickedness" in which all is danger for virtue, in which I had too often, perhaps, experienced the extent of my weakness.

If I remember where I was, and what I was, when the grace of Thy vocation came to seek me, and what I am now, owing to that vocation, should not I exclaim with the prophet, "Raising up the needy from the earth, and lifting up the poor out of the dunghill, that He may place him with princes, with the princes of His people." (Ps. cxii. 7, 8.)

In what manner did God call me? Remember the series of happy occurrences which brought you to the foot of the altar. Great God, how admirable are Thy ways! What had I done to deserve this glorious call? Blessed be Thou forever for granting me that first undeserved grace, which on Thy part seemed to be a pledge of those which would follow.

Second Point.—After God had created man He placed him in the terrestrial paradise. "He put him into the paradise of pleasure." (Gen. ii. 15.) How sweet and happy a life he might have led there! There he enjoyed conversation with the Lord, who spoke to him as a friend speaks to a friend.

After God had honored me with the priestly character, He placed me in the sanctuary, a real paradise on earth for the fervent priest. It exclusively depends upon me to enjoy therein heavenly pleasures. It is the home of peace, the dwelling of angels, the house of God Himself. Does He not herein keep the most intimate communications with His faithful ministers? To the priest we may apply what the Queen of Saba said of the servants of Solomon, "Blessed are Thy servants who stand before Thee always." (3 Kings, x. 8.)

We confess that great innocence and uncommon virtue are necessary to tread upon so holy a ground. "Put off the shoes from thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." (Ex. iii. 5.) "Holiness becomes Thy house, O God, unto length of days." But, on the other hand, what do we do

in the house of God, what do we see there that is not calculated to purify the soul, and to make it grow steadily toward sanctity? The divine psalmody, the administration of the sacraments, the great sacrifice of the Mass, the presence of the Lamb, ever living and ever slain. Does it not seem impossible to be employed in the service of the sanctuary and not to become soon a perfect man? Yet how many priests there are who have found the sad secret of uniting together in their persons the vilest of passions and the most sublime of professions! Alas! without minding others, should not I blush and tremble for myself? Has the holiness of my life agreed heretofore with the sanctity of the place where the greater part of my time is spent, and with my heavenly occupations in the house of God?

Third Point.—Man is bound to employ, for the glory of God, all his faculties all the moments of his life. Such is his proximate end, and in accomplishing it he will attain sovereign beatitude, which is his ultimate end. But far more extensive are the obligations of the priest, far more magnificent are his hopes.

His duty is to compensate for the few, insufficient homages which men of the world render God, they being distracted from His worship by unavoidable troubles and cares. All the days of the priest are holy days. To us priests the people cry out, "Bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord, who stand in the house of the Lord; in the nights lift up your hands to the holy places and bless the Lord." (Ps. cxxxiii. 1, 2, 3.) For the man and the Christian it suffices to serve God, but the priest, in virtue of his state, is obliged to spend his existence in gaining hearts to Him. To wrest souls from the world and corruption, in order to give them to God, such is, says St. Anselm, the peculiar object of the priestly vocation.

If the man accomplish his proximate end, he shall be saved; if the priest be faithful to his, he shall obtain a measure of glory and of happiness infinitely greater. "They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that instruct many to justice, as stars to all eternity." (Dan. xii. 3.)

Oh, my God! when I first entered the sanctuary nothing appeared to me so beautiful and sublime as a vocation to the priesthood. But since that day how weak my faith has grown! We accustom ourselves to everything. Alas! I have accustomed myself to being a priest, and by continuous progressive transgressions, how deep down I have fallen! O Jesus, adorable Priest, raise me from this abyss; open my eyes, reanimate my tepidity; and since at Thy altar I always find Thee as kind and merciful as on the day of my first Mass, restore to me, I beseech Thee, the

joy and fervor of that beautiful day—renew and strengthen within me the spirit of my holy vocation. "Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit." (Ps. l. 14.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—My vocation to the priesthood somewhat resembles the act of my creation. They are both the work of God's love and predilection. In order to make me a man He made me out of nothing; in order to make me a priest He took me out of the world. In what manner did He call me? My God, blessed be Thou for having granted me that first grace, which, on Thy part, was as a pledge of all those which were to follow it.

Second Point.—God has placed me in the priestly state as He had placed the first man in the terrestrial paradise. What prevents me from enjoying celestial delights? The sanctuary is the home of peace, the dwelling of angels, the house of God Himself. I begin to do what the angels do. A great sanctity is demanded of me, but how easy it is for me to attain it!

Third Point.—Man created for God should spend all his existence in serving Him; if he accomplishes this end, he secures for himself the sovereign felicity of heaven. The duties of the priest are far more extensive, his hopes far more magnificent also. He must strive to attain the perfection of charity by the practice of the evangelical counsels. If he be faithful to his vocation, he will obtain a degree of glory far superior to that of the lay Christian. Return thanks; humble yourself; often ask yourself the question, Why did I become a priest?

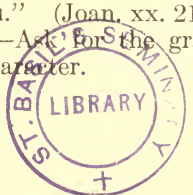
MEDITATION VII.

DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD CONSIDERED IN ITS OBJECT.

1.—*With Regard to God.*
2.—*With Regard to the Church.*
3.—*With Regard to Men.*

First Prelude—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ risen from the dead, appearing to His apostles, whom He had consecrated priests on the eve of His death, and saying to them, "As the Father has sent Me, I send you." (Joan. xx. 21.)

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace of a profound respect toward the priestly character.



First Point.—The Priest and God. The nearer a man is to Him who is the principle of all greatness, the greater he is himself; the majesty of the Monarch is reflected in those who approach Him. What has the Lord done to us in calling us to the priesthood? After separating us from all the people to unite us with Himself (Num. xvi. 9), He willed, so to say, to share with us the honors of His throne, constituting us His ambassadors. "He that heareth you heareth Me; he that despiseth you, despiseth Me." (Luc. x. 16.) What is the object of this embassy from heaven to earth? It is to proclaim the law of the Master of the universe, to sustain His cause, to cause His name to be respected, to defend His interests. God institutes Himself our client. He commands us to protect His glory, to prevent outrages against His Majesty. To the priest it belongs to establish, to strengthen His kingdom over souls. The priest is the man of God. "But Thou, O man of God" (Tim. vi. 11), the man of the Most Holy Trinity, His public adorer, the propagator of His worship; the man of the Father to give Him children of adoption, teach them how to serve Him, prepare them for His kingdom; the man of the Son, the preacher of His Gospel, the sacrificer of His body, the dispensator of His mysteries, in order to apply to men the fruits of His Redemption on the cross; the man of the Holy Ghost, the organ which he uses to enlighten the minds of men to purify and sanctify their hearts.

Second Point.—The Priest and the Church. In the Church the priest occupies everywhere the rank of honor. The different images under which the Church is represented give us the most exalted idea of the priesthood. The Church is that glorious Spouse whom Jesus Christ loved so much that He shed His blood to purify her from the least stain. The priests are the guardians of that spouse; they watch for the preservation of her beauty, so that she may ever remain worthy of Him. The Church is an army in battle array striving for heaven against hell. The priests, as the lieutenants of the Son of God, are the officers of that army. She is a ship sailing through storms and dangers. The priests, under Jesus Christ, her pilot, must direct her ways, struggle with the waves, and lead her passengers, who are their brethren, to the haven of blessed eternity! She is that mystical body of which Christ is the head, of which the members are all Christians. The priests are the noble parts of that body; its eyes to enlighten it, its arms to defend, its heart to enliven it, diffusing everywhere that sacred charity without which there is naught but death. She is that conquered nation which the Redeemer bought with so great a price. (1 Cor. vi. 20.) The priests are the magis-

trates, the doctors, the princes of that chosen race, of that privileged nation. She is that sacred edifice which wisdom built for itself, in which the children of God are nourished, brought up, enriched with all good. The priests are the governors of that palace "Being set over all by Him, he governed the house committed to him." (Gen. xxxix. 4.) They are the columns of that temple; they bear up the Church; upon them rests the entire world as upon its foundations. Take away the priesthood, what becomes of the Church? Take away the sacrifice of propitiation offered by the priests, what becomes of the world?

Third Point.—The Priest and Men. Who are co-operators of God in the great work of the redemption of mankind. St. Jerome calls us *mundi salvatores.* I imagine how much admired a man would be whom God would associate with Himself in the government of the universe, regulating with Him the succession of seasons? O Priests! your destiny is far more glorious. You have not been destined to direct the course of the sun, raise up or calm tempests. All these things are within the circle of nature and time; you are called to labor in the order of things eternal and divine, to give saints to heaven, to snatch victims from hell; to sanctify souls, to co-operate in the redemption of a spiritual, indestructible world. O Priests! He who without you created the world has willed not to save it without you! The whole life of Christ related to the salvation of the world; your life should relate exclusively to the same end. Hear you not Him giving you your mission? "As the Father sent Me, so do I send you." You shall be the instruments of My grace, and through you will I accomplish to the end of time the designs of My mercy.

Viewed with the eyes of faith, the man disappears in the priest; we behold naught in him but Jesus Christ continuing His work of reparation for the glory of God and the happiness of mankind. Through him Jesus Christ instructs in the pulpit, grants a new life at Baptism, remits sins in the Sacrament of Penance, and works out so many miracles at the altar. Through the priest it is that the Redeemer opens all the sources of salvation.

Let us bow down our heads in the dust as we remember the great things which God has done with us and for us. "He who is mighty has done great things to me." The elevated state to which we have been raised ought to be the measure of our humility. "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God." (Eccli. iii. 20.)

O my God, Thou hast honored me with a priesthood infinitely more glorious than that of Aaron. Of me it may be rather said than of him: "He exalted Aaron. He girded him about with a

glorious girdle, and clothed him with a robe of glory." (Eccli. xlv. 7, 9.) Can I think of this and not confound myself? The slightest stain comes out in shameful relief upon a garment of purple. Did not I sadly sully my divine character? How many times did not the sight of my guilty soul sadden Thy holy angels and Thine own paternal heart? What is the dignity of the unworthy priest but a rich garment in the mire? I am now, O my God, firmly resolved on it. I will henceforth respect the august character wherewith Thou hast clothed me, and with the help of Thy grace I will endeavor to honor it as much as I am honored by it. "I will honor my ministry." (Rom. xi. 13.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The priest considered with regard to God. The nearer a man is to infinite greatness, the greater he is himself. The God of Israel separated you from all the people and united you to Himself. The priest is the ambassador of God, the man of God, *Homo Dei,* of the Father, of the Son, of the Holy Ghost. The Almighty instituted us His representatives, charged us to defend his rights.

Second Point —The Priest and the Church. In the Church the priest occupies always the first rank. All the figures of the Church concur in enhancing the glory of the priesthood. They are the spouse of Jesus Christ, an army in battle array, a ship tossed about but never sunk, the mystical body of the Saviour, a conquered nation, the edifice which wisdom has built for itself!

Third Point.—The Priest and the Souls of Men. The whole mission of Jesus Christ on earth related to the salvation of souls. The mission of the priest is identical with that of Jesus Christ. "As my Father sent me, I send you." We are His co-operators and aids. Our humility should be as deep as our dignity is high.

MEDITATION VIII.

DIGNITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD CONSIDERED IN ITS POWERS.

1.—*How far They Extend.*
2.—*How much They Elevate Us.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ blessing His apostles, and saying to all his priests in their person, "All power is given to me in heaven and on earth. Go teach My Gospel; baptize. Whosoever's sins you will remit, they are remitted," etc.

Second Prelude.—Beseech the Holy Ghost to make you understand to how great a dignity you are raised, through the powers annexed to the priesthood; beg of Him to grant you sentiments conformable to so sublime a dignity.

First Point.—Extent of the priestly powers. We may say that they are unlimited as to time, places, and persons.

They are unlimited as to time. As long as there will be on earth souls to save from error and vice, souls to be sanctified and saved, the priesthood will continue to exercise that sacred mission. "Behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.)

The powers of the priest are unlimited as to place. There is not a place where Jesus Christ will not reign. All the nations were given Him as His inheritance (Ps. ii. 8); but He reigns through the ministry of the priest, who submits to Him the minds of men by faith: "Preach the Gospel to every creature" (Matt. xvi. 15); and their hearts by obedience to His law: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) All the nations of the earth receive the influence of this power; it extends beyond this world, for it is felt in heaven itself, whither it sends forth elect; it extends into hell, whose victims it snatches away. It upholds the Church militant, efficaciously consoles the Church suffering, increases the joys of the Church triumphant.

In a certain degree the priest can say like Him who sent him, "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth."

The powers of the priest are unlimited as to persons. The great and the low, the kings and their subjects, the learned and the ignorant, are subject to his authority; from him they expect light, pardon, and life.

"He who believes in Me, although he be dead, shall live." (Joan. xi. 25.) How would we set limits to a power to which God Himself will be subject; for the priest appeases the anger of the Almighty, and causes the Son of God to come down in the hands of His minister, who disposes of Him as he pleases. "The power of the priest is like unto the power of the divine Persons," says St. Bernard.

Second Point.—How much the powers of the priesthood exalt us! When the holy Doctors consider our dignity under this aspect, they confess that they can find nothing to which they may compare it. O Priest, who is like unto thee? Is it the monarch? He has power over bodies only, but to thee souls are subject. (St. Chrysostom.) St. Ambrose knows not how to express the reverence which the sacerdotal character inspires him with. He thus addresses

himself to us: "Hear me, most blessed fathers, most holy brethren; hear me, sons of Levi, sacerdotal race, sanctified offspring, the guiders and rulers of the flock of Christ; hear me when I address to you a prayer and an exhortation. No comparison can give us to understand the honor and sublimity of the priesthood. The king with all his power and majesty, if compared to the priest, is much less than a mass of lead compared to the most pure gold." (St. Ambrose, *De dignitate sacerdotis.*)

O Priest, who is like unto thee? Shall I call thee an angel? There are really many points of resemblance between these two privileged beings, the angel and the priest; the same name, the same offices, the same occupations; yet, to whom of the angels did God say, "Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven?" What angel can of himself give the grace which justifies? I fancy I am about the altar, the angels assisting, as St. John describes them. "They fell down before the throne upon their faces" (Ap. vii. 11); but there the priest is standing; he has the authority, the commission to act. The angels are simply the witnesses of the sacrifice; by God's will the priest is the minister thereof. They are prostrate before the throne of the Lord; I am at His table, I unite bodily to myself Him whom the angels scarcely dare behold.

O Priest, who is like unto thee? Is it Mary? She, indeed, surpasses in sanctity and grandeur all that is below God; but if there is question of powers, those of the priest are far more astonishing than hers. "Although her excellence was much superior to that of the apostles, not to her, but to them did almighty God commit the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Innocent III.) Five words of the humble Virgin caused the Word of God to come down in her virginal womb; five words of the priestly power make Him come down on the altar. "Oh, the venerable dignity of the priests, into whose hands, as it happened into Mary's bosom, the Word of God becomes incarnate." (St. Augustine.) The consent which she gave was the conditional cause of the mystery of the Incarnation. "Let it be done unto me; and the Word was made flesh;" the action of the priest speaking in the name of Jesus Christ and through His almighty power is the efficient cause of the transubstantiation, which is a new incarnation, an extension of the incarnation at Nazareth.

That which Mary did once, thousands of priests do every day. She gave the Son of God a body liable to suffer and die; we render Him present within our hands, in His immortal, impassible state. O Priests, did you understand your state? The thought of it would cause you to tremble. "You are men all divine." (St.

Ambrose.) "You are visible gods." (St. Clement.) "You are great gods, in whose assembly the God of gods desires to be." (St. Augustine.) Of you, above all, did the Prophet King say, "I have said . . . you are gods;" for, if God alone can forgive sins, justify sinners, give the Holy Ghost, bring down God from heaven, O Priests, I say it, you are gods; for every day you renew those wonders, and the last one mentioned, which is the most noble action performed in time, is also one of the most ineffable operations of God in eternity. "Thou art My son, to-day have I begotten thee." (Heb. v. 5.) St. Gregory of Nazianzen goes so far as to say that the priest is a god whose mission it is to make gods. (*Orat. Apol.*)

Blessed be Thou, O my God, who hast given "such power to men." Blessed be Thou who hast chosen me to exercise it, notwithstanding my great unworthiness, and hast exalted me so much for the glory of Thy name and the benefit of my brethren! Oh, how much good I could have done since my consecration! Have I done it, O my God? The heaven, the earth, purgatory, all the creatures ought to feel the happy effect of the immense powers Thou hast conferred on me. What a shame for me, what a crime, if I should become useless on earth, having in my hands the salvation of the world! What shall I answer then, Jesus, if Thou reproachest me that Thy blood has been useless? Let this sacred blood be now upon me to purify my soul, to inflame my heart, to transform me into a holy priest. I will then pour it down upon souls with greater zeal and efficacy?

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Extent of the priestly powers. They may be said to be unlimited as to time. They will end only with the world. As to place, Jesus Christ must reign in every place through the labors of the priesthood; as to persons, the great and the humble, the poor and the rich, all expect from it light, pardon, and life. The Son of God Himself has to a certain extent willed to be subject to the priest.

Second Point.—How much the powers of the priesthood exalt us. O Priest, who is like unto thee? A king? He exercises his power over bodies, and thou over souls. In the holy tribunal thou art the arbiter of his destiny; the one judges, the other is judged; on what side is the pre-eminence? The angel? To which of the angels has God said, "Whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven"? The Queen of angels? Not to Mary, but to thee, O Priest, have the keys of heaven been

given. Her humility caused the Son of God to come down in her womb once only; thou causest Him to come down on the altar every day. "The priest is a god whose mission is to make men gods." (St. Gr. Naz.)

MEDITATION IX.

OBLIGATION OF HOLINESS FOR THE PRIEST, RESULTING FROM HIS VOCATION.

1.—*Teachings of the Doctors.*
2.—*Of the Church.*
3.—*Of Reason Itself.*

First Prelude.—Imagine that you have before you the painting which a certain pious cardinal loved to behold in order to remind him of the sanctity of his vocation. Aaron was there represented, attired in his pontifical vestments, holding a censer in his hand. As he was about to commence his sacred function, he seemed to recollect himself profoundly, struck with religious awe, and to utter the sentiment, What am I called to do?

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace to know and to reach the degree of perfection to which God desired to raise you when He chose you for His minister..

First Point.—Teaching of the Doctors concerning sacerdotal sanctity. He who was chosen to be simply a Christian is by that mere fact called to possess great virtues.

"He chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and unspotted in His sight in charity." "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh." (Gal. v. 24.) "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom. viii. 9.) "Whosoever doth not carry his cross and come after Me can not be My disciple." (Luc. xiv. 27.) But will the holiness demanded of the simple Christian suffice for the priest? Let us hear the Doctors. "God requires more perfection of the bishop than of the priest, of the priest than of the deacon, of the deacon than of the acolyte, and of all those who are members of the clergy than of the simple Christian." (St. Ambrose.) "There are men of consummate virtue, who despise earthly things, and who, through intimate commerce with the Divinity, keep themselves elevated above all creatures; men who are in regard to other men what the soul is to the body. To men of this stamp it belongs to be established pastors over the flock of Jesus Christ." (St. Gregory Nazianzen.) According to St. Augustine such ought

to be the purity, devotion, prudence, and sanctity of the priests, that whosoever would see them ought to be struck with admiration and forced to exclaim, Men who lead such lives are in reality men of God. They ought to surpass the faithful in perfection as much as they surpass them in dignity; as much as the life of the shepherd is more excellent than that of the flock; as much as the brightness of the sun eclipses that of minor stars. Such is the language of a St. Gregory, St. John Chrysostom, and Justinian. St. Isidore takes the distance from heaven to earth as a term of comparison between the sanctity of the priest and that of the faithful.

Second Point.—Thoughts of the Church concerning sacerdotal holiness. How careful the Church is in confiding the grave interests of God's glory and of the sanctification of souls to no one except to holy persons. Does she perceive marks of vocation to the priesthood in a child? She separates him from the world, brings him under the shadow of the altar. She uses every means to make him imbibe the spirit of his vocation. She makes him pass through all kinds of trials, and before he is admitted to sacerdotal consecration he must have exerted himself in the practice of the virtues which the people will expect to find in him, as in their model. When the time approaches to lay hands upon him, she prepares herself for it by fasting and prayer. She questions him who presents the candidates in the name of the faithful, and seems to be struck with fear at the thought of her action. "Know you them to be worthy?" She does not say, Do you *think* that they are worthy, but, Are you sure that they are worthy? *Scis.* Is it the spirit of the world or Thine own, O my God, which leads them toward the sanctuary? Recall to mind the pressing exhortations, the counsels, the prayers used in the ceremony of ordination. It is not an angelic chastity, or sincere piety only, that she requires. She openly declares that she will have in her ministers the perfection of faith and that of good works. *Ministros ecclesiæ fide et opere debere esse perfectos.* (Pontif.)

Third Point.—Reason demands of the priest that he should be holy. Like his Master, he has been sent for no other end but to glorify God and to save men, and therefore his righteousness, like that of the Saviour, should shine resplendent with that twofold charity, the love of God and that of the neighbor, which is the bond of all perfection. Here is matter for serious reflection.

I am a priest to maintain the interests of the Lord. This is my first end; and as a consequence my first duty is to be filled with an ardent zeal for His glory. "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts." (3 Kings, xix. 10.) Oh, how keenly

the good priest feels the outrages offered to the divine Majesty! In the midst of a people whose idols are gold and the flesh, his sentiments are those of St. Paul in the midst of the idolaters of Athens. "His spirit was stirred within him, seeing the city wholly given to idolatry." (Acts, xvii. 16.) He grieves to see that God, whom he loves, is so little known.

"Just Father, the world hath not known Thee." (Joan. xvii. 25.) He does not rest contented with empty desires; he speaks, exhorts, beseeches, rebukes. He would at the moment of death be able to say with St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight"; and with the Master, "I have glorified Thee on the earth. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given me out of the world. I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do." (Joan. xvii.)

I am a priest in order to contribute by all possible means to the eternal welfare of my brethren. I must therefore spend my life in apostolic labors, give my life, if necessary, for the salvation of souls. "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls." (2 Cor. xii. 15.)

I have much need of patience, compassion, self-denial, sanctity! Saints only have the power to make saints.

Such were my sentiments concerning the priesthood when I was preparing to receive its character. I then, in all simplicity, adopted and cherished the thoughts of the Church and the sentiments of her Doctors. How is it that those immutable truths make now no impression upon my heart? Why did I neglect the presence of my God? Why did I forget my most sacred obligations? What did I do for Thy glory, O my God? What did I do for my brethren and for my self? O my Lord, how badly did I accomplish the intentions Thou hadst regarding me! How far I am yet from that eminent sanctity to which Thou hadst called me, when Thou invitedst me to the most exalted of all states of life! How many there are amongst my sheep who are more pleasing to God than their shepherd! To humble myself before Thee, O my Jesus, to implore Thy mercy—this is all I can do. As I will soon go up to the altar, I will, before ascending its steps, beg of Thee to send me Thy light and Thy truth.

Emitte lucem tuam et veritatem tuam. These were my guides during my clerical education which led me to the holy mountain and introduced me into the Holy of Holies. Let this light of a lively faith shine again before my eyes, and do Thou, O my God, my hope, my strength, grant me to walk every day of my life in the way of that perfect righteousness which Thou hast traced out for Thy ministers.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Thoughts of the Doctors concerning sacerdotal sanctity. God requires more perfection of the bishop than of the priest, of the priest than of the deacon, of the deacon than of the acolyte, and of the clergy than of the simple faithful. The priest should surpass the faithful in sanctity as much as the life of the pastor is more excellent than that of the flock; as much as the brightness of the sun eclipses that of minor stars; as much as heaven is elevated above the earth.

Second Point.—Sentiments of the Church concerning sacerdotal sanctity. How careful the Church is in confiding the great interests of God's glory and of the sanctification of souls to none but persons of unquestionable holiness! What care she bestows upon the education of the clergy! How she trembles when there is question of opening to them the doors of the sanctuary! *Scis illos dignos esse?* She has openly declared that her ministers should be "perfect in faith and good works."

Third Point.—Reason demands of the priest that he should be holy. His two-fold mission is to glorify God and to save souls. This holiness, like that of the Saviour, should shine with the splendor of that two-fold charity, the bond of all perfection—that is, the love of God and that of the neighbor. "With zeal have I been zealous for the Lord God of hosts."

"I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls." O Jesus, renew within my bowels the true spirit of Thy priesthood.

MEDITATION X.

THE PRIEST MUST BE HOLY BECAUSE OF HIS CONSECRATION.

1.—*Effects of the Sacerdotal Consecration.*
2.—*Duties resulting from that Consecration.*

First Prelude.—Go back in spirit to the solemn moment of your ordination, when the Pontiff, after invoking all the saints, asked with them for you and the other candidates prostrate on the ground all the benedictions and graces of the priesthood. *Ut hos electos benedicere, sanctificare, et consecrare digneris.*

Second Prelude.—Ask God to make you understand the transformation which His Holy Spirit operated in you at that moment, and to aid you to accomplish the duties resulting from it.

First Point.—Effects of the sacerdotal consecration. God said to Moses, "Thou shalt set the Levites in presence of Aaron and of his sons, and shalt consecrate them, being offered to the Lord; and shalt separate them from the midst of the children of Israel to be mine, and afterward they shall enter into the tabernacle of the covenant to serve me." (Numb. viii. 13 *seq.*) Behold three effects of the sacerdotal consecration. It separates us from the world, it gives us to God, it applies us to the sacred ministry.

I. It separates us from the world, its errors and vices, with which we shall have no relation except to battle against them. "You shall separate them;" and as the character of the sacrament is ineffaceable, our divorce from the world is eternal. We shall not be subject to its customs; we shall live under other laws. Our world, the world of the priest, is not this material visible world; it is a world "not of this creation" (Heb. ix. 11), a world which is eternal and divine. Our world is God, God Himself, who gives Himself to us as the portion of our inheritance, and to whom we are offered as His ministers. *Ut sint mei . . . , ut serviant mihi.* From that moment He has new claims upon us.

II. By receiving ordination, the priest really becomes the man of God, the man of His glory, the man of all His wills, His agent, the co-operator of His designs, the dispenser of His graces. Through him it is that God will accomplish everything belonging to the direction and sanctification of souls. St. John says, speaking of the Word, "All things were made by Him, and without Him nothing was made of what was made." (Joan. i.) The same may be said of the priest, or of Jesus Christ in the priest, regarding all the good done in the Church. The priest is the instrument or the means thereof.

The imposition of hands has different significations. It signifies the state of victims and public penitents to which we are dedicated by the priesthood. The priest is loaded with the iniquities of the people; his duty is to bewail and expiate them. The imposition of hands may also signify that, in receiving ordination, we are placed under the guidance of the Holy Ghost. "Receive the Holy Ghost."

By this imposition of hands, God, as it were, takes possession of our whole being; we become entirely His property, in order to exercise the most sacred functions.

III. Know you then, O priest, which are those functions, those occupations of every day? Behold some of them: to render Jesus Christ present on the altar, place Him in your hands and in your heart, offer Him in sacrifice through the power He has given you over His natural body; to beget Jesus Christ in the

hearts of men and cause Him to dwell there by faith, after having banished therefrom the devil and sin; to cause the Holy Ghost to come down on the Church by the preaching of the Gospel, and the administration of the sacraments; and through the happiest transformation, to render men partakers of the nature of God, make them lead a life like unto His, and prepare them to enjoy His own felicity. Can we imagine anything so good? Oh, how sacred thy mouth, how holy and venerable thy hands!

Second Point.—Duties resulting from the sacerdotal consecration.

I. It has withdrawn us from the world and from everything earthly, like vessels of honor exclusively destined to the service of the sanctuary; and, therefore, there is nothing in the world that is so much out of its place as a priest who is fond of the world, who takes delight in the affairs and intrigues of the world, who has adopted the thoughts and sentiments of the world with regard to poverty, humiliation, suffering. Man of God, what dost thou lower thyself to?

II. While separating us from profane matters, sacerdotal unction has dedicated, consecrated us wholly to the service of the Lord. Oh, how much we ought to respect ourselves! What use should we make of the faculties of our soul, of the senses of our body? People respect things that have been consecrated; it is not every hand which may touch the chalice. O priest, what is there in you that was not consecrated to the Most Holy Trinity? Your eyes behold Him on the altar; will you use them for vanity? What will you do with those hands which touch, carry and give Him, and have received the power to bless? (*Ut quæcumque benedixerint benedicantur.*—Pont.) Your mouth was consecrated for the preaching of the Gospel; it is consecrated anew every day by the words of consecration at Mass; shall it be used for anything except to pray to Him and announce His greatness?

III. Let us consider this unity, identity of power and operation which the priesthood establishes between us and the Adorable Trinity. Since the priest produces the Word as the Father, disposes of all the graces of redemption with the Son, and sanctifies souls as the Holy Ghost, ought not his life to be an interior life, all consumed in God? To us rather than to the common Christian should they apply the words of St. Paul, "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.)

If on this day I dare approach Thee, shall I not have to beg forgiveness for my many transgressions? Thou didst enrich me with the precious pearl of the priesthood; what have I done with it?

Through my tepidity and my many sins, it has become a gem all covered over with mud. Ah! prophet of the lamentations, what cause I find here for thy wailings and thy tears! "The noble sons of Sion, and they that were clothed with the best of gold, how are they esteemed as earthen vessels, the work of the potter's hands? They that were brought up in scarlet have embraced the dung." (Lam. iv. 2, 5.) But, O Jesus, since Thou canst and wilt repair everything, come, I beseech Thee, come; and by the fire of Thy divine love, consume all that has tarnished the honor of my priesthood. Come Thou, and dedicate again to Thyself the temple of my soul; come once more, and vouchsafe to bless, sanctify and consecrate me.

Celebrate the anniversary of your ordination. Read frequently the chapters v. and xi. of the fourth book of the "Following of Christ." Behold from time to time your consecrated hands and say to yourself, "Thou art a priest forever."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Effects of the sacerdotal consecration. 1. It separates us from the world. *Separabis eos de medio filiorum Israel.* 2. It unites us to God. *Ut sint mei.* By it we become the men of God, His co-operators, the dispensers of His graces. It dedicates us to the most admirable functions. Here are some of those functions: Mystically to immolate Jesus Christ, beget Him in the hearts of men; cause the Holy Ghost to come down, render men partakers of the nature of God.

Second Point.—Duties resulting from our sacerdotal consecration. It has withdrawn us from the world; let us not re-enter it. No one is as much out of his place as a priest who is fond of the world, who takes delight in the affairs and intrigues of the world. Man of God, what dost thou lower thyself to? It has dedicated us wholly to the glory of God. That which has been consecrated deserves to be honored; every hand may not touch the chalice. Oh, how much the priest ought to respect himself! Our sacerdotal consecration establishes some identity of operations between us and the Holy Trinity. Our life ought to be all interior, all hidden in God.

MEDITATION XI.

THE PRIEST MUST BE HOLY ON ACCOUNT OF THE FUNCTIONS WHICH HE PERFORMS.

1.—*As they Regard God.*
2.—*As they Regard our Neighbor.*

First Point.—Sacerdotal functions relating directly to the honor of God. The divine office, the ceremonies, the sacrifice. Ah, how great should be our esteem for those all-heavenly functions! Should we not, when we perform them, be animated with angelical fervor, ardent zeal for the glory of God? Should we not rather at that time have the thoughts, the affections, the heart of Jesus Christ Himself? In fact, when the priest performs those functions, he is the Son of God risen from the dead, concealing Himself under the appearance and acting through the organs of a mortal man.

The Church, obliged as she is to offer to God incessant homages worthy of His infinite greatness, knows well that this she can not accomplish except in Jesus Christ and through Jesus Christ. Before the incarnation God had no other adorers but angels and men, who were finite beings, mere creatures, animated nothings; only from the time that the Word was made flesh has God been worthily, divinely honored. Jesus Christ is the first, the only servant worthy of His Father. On this account the Church in her liturgy seeks no supplement to her praises, save in Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, elevated above the heavens, separated from the contaminations and distractions of earth. "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. vii. 26.) The priest, who is Jesus Christ rendered visible, should, therefore, offer compensation for the insufficiencies of the faithful, by offering to God for them the perpetual and infinite homages which Jesus Christ offers His Father, both in heaven and in the Holy Eucharist.

One mediator of God and men, the Man-Christ Jesus, the Word incarnate, is the center of religion. Through Him the angels praise, the dominations adore, the powers offer to God their holy "tremblings." Through Him men present their supplications. *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum.* The priest the personification of Jesus Christ, does on earth what the Saviour does in heaven. When he takes his breviary, when he ascends

the altar, the Church triumphant bids him praise, bless, and return thanks in her name; the Church suffering bids him make atonement; and the Church militant bids him supplicate in her stead, to honor God, to appease His anger with greater perfection than they could who are taken up with the many preoccupations and cares of the world. See what innocence, what spirit of sacrifice, what charity is required of him who performs these sacred functions. Do they not presuppose the most intimate union between Jesus Christ and His ministers? Should not our heart be like His, a victim perpetually offered as a holocaust for the glory of God and the salvation of men?

Second Point.—Functions of the priesthood which relate directly to the salvation of our neighbor. There are two of these. the priest is mediator and pastor.

I. As mediator the priest stands up between God and human nature. Whilst thus standing, what does he do? He goes up to heaven, into the very bosom of God, to seek the benedictions which He pours down upon us, and carries up our homages and prayers to the foot of the throne of the infinite Majesty. In its object this mediation is sublime, since it reconciles heaven to earth, glorifies God, saves the souls of men, and obliges the Almighty to love and reward magnificently creatures whom He was about to crush under the eternal weight of His anger. In its extent the mediatorship of the priest is immense, for it relates to all the needs of men for time and for eternity, and to the needs of all men. In its efficacy the priest's mediation is all-powerful, for can God refuse anything to the merits and prayers of His Son?

The house of Israel was about to perish; the most dreadful sentence was pronounced against it. "He said He would destroy them." (Ps. cv. 23.) Moses intervenes. Israel is saved. . . . "And the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people." (Ex. xxxii. 14.) Yet Moses was a mere man; he had it not in his power as we have to raise up the Son of God as a victim between an angry God and sinful men.

But now how well beloved of God must he be who negotiates with Him for the salvation of the whole world? *Pro nostra et totius mundi salute.* "The priest must be perfect, because to him was given the office of praying for the people." (Theod. in Lev.) How could I dare intercede for others if I have reason to tremble for myself?

II. As pastor the priest should nourish souls with the bread of the word of God, and renovate them through the virtue of the sacraments. These two functions require that we should be filled

with the gifts of the Holy Ghost and be docile to His inspirations. Is it man that can save the believers through the "folly of preaching"? (1 Cor. i. 21.) Paul plants, Apollo waters, but God alone can cause His word to spring up and bring forth fruit. We speak to the ears of men; God gives the intelligence and speaks to the heart. Oh, how many words are lost in the air, because they come forth from a heart not warmed by charity! They are children's arrows which can not penetrate the hearts, they being shot off by too feeble hands.

What of the sacraments? What is there more holy? To administer them is to apply to souls the merits of the death and blood of Jesus Christ. Do we not know the rule: They who are not holy should not handle holy things? To speak of the Sacrament of Penance only, is it too much to require of its minister a well-tried chastity, an invincible patience, consummate prudence, a perfect charity?

You are about to perform at the altar the most holy of all the functions of the priesthood; but there also you will receive the most powerful aid which you desire in your feebleness. You shall have within your hands the very treasure of all graces and mercies. In your preparations and thanksgivings, address to God with confidence and fervor the prayer of St. Augustine, "Grant, O Lord, what Thou commandest, and command what Thou wilt," and also that of the Church, "Grant me Thy grace, worthily to accomplish the functions of the office Thou hast imposed on me."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Functions of the priesthood relating directly to the honor of God. The Holy Office, the ceremonies, the Mass. Do we sufficiently prize these heavenly functions? Whilst performing them we should have the fervor of angels, the affections and very heart of Jesus Christ. In these functions the priest is the Son of God, risen from the dead, honoring His Father through the organs of a mortal man. He does on earth what Jesus Christ does in heaven. Do not these sublime functions demand the most innocent life, the most ardent charity? Do they not suppose the most intimate union between the Saviour and ourselves?

Second Point.—Functions of the priesthood relating to the salvation of souls. The priest is *mediator* and *pastor*. He stands between God and human nature. He brings down blessings from heaven and offers up our petitions. The priest's mediation is sublime in its object, since it reconciles God with men; immense in its extent, since it relates to all the needs of man and the needs

of all men; almighty in its efficacy—can the Lord refuse anything to the prayers of His Son? Think how well beloved of God he ought to be, in order to negotiate with Him for the salvation of the whole world! As pastor the priest must nourish souls with the bread of the word of God, and renovate them through the sacraments. This they can do only inasmuch as they are filled with the spirit of God, and docile to His inspirations.

MEDITATION XII.

EMINENT HOLINESS DEMANDED IN THE PRIESTHOOD

1.—*True Idea of Perfect Unity.*
2.—*Why I should Endeavor to Obtain it.*

Everything should be pure in him who holds communications so frequent and intimate with the Holy of Holies. "Oh, how clean ought those hands to be! How pure that mouth, how holy that body, how spotless the heart of a priest into whom the author of purity so often enters!" (Im., book 6.) Later on we will meditate on sacerdotal chastity; we will now merely speak of the purity of his soul.

First Point.—Perfect purity of soul. The soul is pure in the same degree as the mind and heart are pure.

I. *Purity of mind.*—That purity is imperfect if I am content with admitting nothing bad in my thoughts; it is perfect if I permit none but good thoughts to dwell in it.

When I love God and remember that He is present everywhere, the searcher and witness of my thoughts, I at once drive from my mind all that is contrary to this infinite sanctity. I do not permit any sinful idea or representation to abide there; I banish therefrom all immodest images, all uncharitable judgments. Can I do less, O my God, than reject at once those unfortunate productions of a corrupt nature, or coming perhaps from the tempter, Thine enemy and my own?

They may be produced in my mind, independently of my will, but in this case, if I stifle them at once, there is naught for me but merit; for he who detests evil practises virtue.

Perfection would consist in doing the same concerning useless thoughts, frivolous reasonings, aimless reflections. How much precious time do I not lose through the ramblings of my mind, and the dreams of my imagination! How much more pleasing to Thee I should be, O my Lord, were I to strive to keep them off and to turn my whole mind to Thee, as far as my weakness permits!

After all, O my sovereign Master, my beginning, my end, when everything in me will tend solely to Thy glory—shall I then have returned to Thee more than what I owe? *Munda quoque cor meum ab omnibus vanis . . . et alienis cogitationibus.*

II. *Purity of the heart.*—The heart is as inordinate in its desires as the mind in its thoughts. If I wish to have for a friend Him whom the universe will one day acknowledge as its King, I must disengage my heart from all evil passion, from all inordinate love of creatures; I must watch and see that nothing will enter therein displeasing to my God. As to objects which I am permitted or obliged to love, I must love nothing but for Him and in Him, and I should love Him in every object. But now, O my God, what means shall I use to separate myself from all things, in order to be united to Thee, and in this way to attain the perfection of a pure heart? I see I must strive to destroy all inordinate love of myself, so that in no case I may follow my natural inclinations or my own desires, as far as they are mine, but that in all things my intention may be to please Thee, to procure Thy glory, nay, Thy greater glory.

Second Point.—Why should I endeavor to obtain this eminent purity? I. This seems to be the first disposition that our Saviour desires to find in His ministers. The apostles had spent three years in His company, withdrawn from all intercourse with the world, and occupied themselves in holy work. Owing to their docility to the inspiration of grace, they had made so much progress in purity that He commended them for it on the eve of his death —"You are clean." Who would believe that notwithstanding this declaration of their innocence, from the lips of Truth itself, they had still need of being purified before receiving the priestly consecration? Yet the Son of God must humble Himself and induce them to do the same. For pride is the beginning of all our sins. He must wash their feet in order to blot the lighter stains out of their souls, for, as He declared to St. Peter, "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me." (Joan. xiii. 8.) Oh, what instruction for priests! How the minister of God deceives himself when he thinks himself pure enough because he avoids grievous transgressions.

II. All that Scripture and tradition teach us concerning sacerdotal sanctity should be principally understood of purity of conscience. "The priests also that come to the Lord, let them be sanctified lest He strike them." (Ex. xix. 22.) "They shall be holy to their God, and shall not profane His name." (Lev. xxi. 6.) "Be you made clean who carry the vessels of the Lord." "The soul of the priest should be more pure than the rays of the

sun; it should, like the star of light, be resplendent with innocence. Such ought to be its purity that if taken up into heaven it would be welcomed by the angels of God." (St. Chrys.) "O priests, if every just man must respect his soul as being the throne of God, how much more should you respect yours and keep it clean from all stain, for you are in a more perfect manner both His throne and His temple." (St. Aug.) Remember the words of your consecration: *Estote assumpti a carnalibus desideriis a terrenis concupiscentiis, quæ militant adversus animam; estote nitidi, mundi, puri, casti.*

III. Since we enjoy the immense honor of producing spiritually in the souls of men, and in reality on the altar, the same Son of God whom Mary gave to the world, whom also the Father begets from all eternity, should not our purity have, if possible, some resemblance to the holiness of the immaculate Virgin and the sanctity of God Himself? The daily celebration of the divine sacrifice, says St. Laurence Justinian, requires a life more angelical than human.

IV. If you need be animated by the hopes of reward, listen to the magnificent promise of our Master, "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God." (Matt. v. 8.) Is it in heaven only that the clean of heart shall see God? Even during the present life He who is sovereign Purity manifests Himself to them. They have the wings of the dove and the eye of the eagle to rise to the contemplation of things divine; they understand and relish the truths of heaven. Those amongst the saints who were more remarkable for their eminent purity, were also those who had the greater share in the extraordinary favors of divine grace. It may be said that during their prayers God communes with them, shows them His holy countenance. All creatures speak to them of God; reveal to them some traits of His beauty, of His greatness, of all His ineffable perfections. They admire His providence in the different events of the world; they perceive Jesus Christ, so to speak, through the Eucharistical veils and the tattered garments of the poor. A pure life is the life of heaven begun upon earth.

Come then, O my Saviour, create in me that perfectly pure heart, a heart that has no affection save for Thee. "Create in me a clean heart, O Lord." Renew within my bowels, and penetrate the most intimate part of my being with that spirit of rectitude through which all my thoughts will tend toward Thee, O Thou supreme Truth, and permit not that any of them may go astray seeking after lying. Take out of my soul all that is therein displeasing to Thee, and put therein all that is pleasing to Thy Majesty,

so that from this moment Thy Holy Spirit, having entirely cleansed it and made it worthy of its destiny, may perpetually dwell there with Thyself and Thy eternal Father. "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—True idea of perfect purity.

The soul is pure in the same degree as the mind and the heart are pure.

I. *Purity of the mind.* That purity is imperfect if I am content with admitting nothing bad in my thoughts; it is perfect if I permit none but good thoughts to dwell in it. I must, as far as possible, banish from my mind useless thoughts. How much precious time I have lost in this manner!

II. *Purity of heart.* In order to be perfect it must not only be disengaged from all inordinate love of creatures, but in things which it can or must love, it must love nothing save for God and in God, and love Him in everything. I shall never attain that perfection, except by striving to destroy all inordinate love for myself.

Second Point.—Why should I endeavor to obtain this eminent purity? It seems to be the first quality which Jesus Christ desires to find in His priests. "If I wash thee not, thou shalt not have part with Me." All that tradition and the Scriptures teach us concerning sacerdotal holiness should be principally understood of purity of conscience. "Be you made clean who carry the vessels of the Lord." The functions which I perform at the altar demand a purity more angelical than human. To this purity of heart has been made the promise to see God in heaven. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

MEDITATION XIII.

HOW THE PRIEST SHOULD LABOR FOR HIS SANCTIFICATION.

1.—*He Should Consider it as his Personal Affair.*
2.—*An Affair Most Difficult and Necessary.*
3.—*As a Most Pressing Affair.*

First Prelude.—Let us draw near unto our Saviour, in order to learn of Him the science of life everlasting. "Master, what shall I do to possess life everlasting?" (Luc. x. 25.)

Second Prelude.—Give me, O my God, that knowledge

which leads to a holy life, and through it to the blessed, to the eternal life. "Give me understanding, and I shall live." (Ps. cxviii. 144.)

First Point.—My sanctification is a personal affair. What shall I gain if I succeed? What shall I lose if I fail in this enterprise? If I attain sanctity, the heaven of the good priest is mine. If I fail, the hell of the bad priest shall be my lot. Almighty God reproves my zeal, if I am not its principal object. I labor and spend myself in order to save souls! For this I am the more senseless if I neglect to save my own. "Every one shall bear his own burden. . . . What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi. 5, 8.) I have more either to lose or to gain than the simple Christian.

Alas, how many priests there are who succumb to this temptation! St. Paul feared this snare for the companions of his apostolic labors. "Take heed to yourselves. Take heed to thyself, I admonish thee, that thou stir up the grace of God, which is in thee by the imposition of my hands." (2 Tim. i. 6.) He feared it for himself; He was careful not to run at an uncertainty. "I so run not as at an uncertainty. . . . But I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway." (1 Cor. ix. 26, 27.) St. Bernard pointed out this temptation to Pope Eugene as one of the most dangerous he had to encounter. "What use, if having saved all others, thou lose thyself? You are a debtor to the Greeks and barbarians, to the learned and the ignorant—are you the only one that has no claim on you? You live for others—live for yourself. . . . The Holy Spirit comes and dwells within us in order that we may communicate Him to others. If you are wise, be not like the channel which keeps naught of what it receives; be rather the reservoir which only gives of its abundance; you will then enrich others without making yourself poor. The misfortune is, says the same Doctor, that there are nowadays in the Church many channels, and very few reservoirs." (Serm. xii. in Cant.) Do I myself follow these wise admonitions?

Second Point.—My sanctification is an affair at the same time difficult and necessary. It is difficult, because of the eminent perfection which God expects to find in His ministers, and of the obligation I am under to renounce everything and forever. "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, carry his cross every day, and follow Me." (Luc. ix. 23.) This continual, universal immolation of nature through grace makes the road to life so narrow that the Saviour Himself appears to be frightened at it. "How . . . narrow the way which leadeth to life." (Matt.

vii. 14.) The conquest demands serious efforts. "Strive to enter." (Luc. xiii. 24.) It is not given as a gift; it is gained, as it were, by assault. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.)

But these efforts are to be made, because they are necessary, as it is also necessary that I save my soul. There is no questioning when necessity exists; we submit to it, everything must bend under the weight of that inflexible law. The word of Jesus Christ settles everything. It is necessary, the only thing necessary. "One thing is necessary." There are some misfortunes which I can bear, but I can not resign myself to the awful fate of the reprobate priest. There is no question of asking what it will cost me to become a holy priest, for I must become such an one, let the cost be what it will. Should I fear in my blindness to be voluntarily immolated in the fire of divine charity, when I am in danger to be cast down into the eternal fire of hell? Suffer I must, and sufferings I shall find in carrying my cross after my Master, but these should not alarm me so much as the torments of hell, which would punish my cowardice by a frightful reprobation.

Third Point.— My sanctification is a pressing affair. To it I must give all my attention, and this immediately. Think of the task! What time is given me to accomplish it? I can not conceal from myself that I have much to do in order to come up to the type of the good shepherd as understood by St. Paul, "Blameless . . . of good behavior." (1 Tim. iii. 2.) In order to be blameless I ought to be free from every vice. This may be called negative holiness, but in order to be of good behavior, as St. Paul requires it of the bishop, I ought to have all sacerdotal virtues. How do I stand in this respect? Oh, how many faults I have to avoid, how many passions to subdue, how many natural inclinations to reform, before having accomplished the first condition, "Blameless." But even then I shall have gone only half-way, since I shall have to reproduce in my own person the spirit, the virtues, the life of Jesus Christ, of whom I have to be the living image. Oh, strange contradiction! With an ardent desire to save my soul, I have heretofore risked my eternal destiny by half measures and imprudent delays.

How could I have hesitated so long in making the only one determination which was according to the teachings of reason and of faith? I desired to sanctify myself, but in a manner different from that which Thou willedst, that is, without doing myself any violence, or crucifying my flesh and my inordinate inclinations. I intended to conciliate holiness with a sensual life which Thou hast cursed, with a disguised ambition and a secret pride which Thou

condemnest; that is, I wanted to thus have the lie given to Thy word, O Thou eternal Truth! I wanted to throw down Thy Gospel, of which I should be the defender and the support, and oblige Thee to reward my passions, at the very time that I was preaching war against them. Since Thou vouchsafest, O my God, to dissipate this fatal self-delusion of mine, permit not that I fall back into it; then, with the help of Thy grace, without losing a moment (too many of them have I lost already!), I will faithfully keep the prescriptions of Thy holy law. This is the resolution I offer Thee, humbly prostrate at Thy feet. "I have sworn and I am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice." (Ps. cxviii. 106.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—My sanctification is a personal affair. I can succeed in it, inasmuch only as I will attend to it myself; in this lies all my concern. "What a man shall have sown that he shall reap." My labors it is that will be rewarded. He who hath created me without me will not save me without me. All my interests are here at stake.

Second Point.—My sanctification is at the same time difficult and necessary. The continual immolation of nature through grace makes the road to life so narrow that the Saviour Himself seems to be frightened at it. "How narrow is the way!" How few there are who find it! One has to die to himself in order to live of the life of Jesus Christ. "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence." But it is idle to argue against necessity. It is necessary that I become a saint, because I can not bear to become a reprobate.

Third Point.—My sanctification is urgent. I have much to do in order to become a truly good priest. How many faults to correct, how many virtues to be acquired! In order to accomplish the work, how much time is given me! I am beginning to-day, and the end perhaps will be to-morrow.

MEDITATION XIV.

USES OF THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION OFFERED TO THE PRIEST.

1.—*The Good Priest Finds in Everything Means of Sanctification.*
2.—*He is Faithful to Turn Them to Account.*

First Prelude.—I imagine myself upon the mountain amongst the hearers of Jesus Christ, when He proclaims the eight beatitudes; hear Him say: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall be filled." (Matt. v. 6.)

Second Prelude.—Give me, O my God, that hunge and thirst, that ardent desire, continually to grow up in righteousness, in order always to become more pleasing to Thy eyes, and then deign to appease that holy longing that comes from Thee.

First Point.—The good priest finds in everything means of sanctification. In his studies, his occupations, his trials, his obligations.

I. When I apply myself to acquire ecclesiastical science, I avoid the occasions of sin which are found in idleness, in useless reading and conversation. I thereby bridle my imagination, an enemy to be dreaded when we give free rein to its fancies. When I study sacred learning, so becoming to the priest, I live in another world, the intellectual world, in a purified atmosphere. I am, as it were, freed from the sway of the senses. I hold converse with the holy Doctors, or with the Holy Ghost who inspired them; I feel my faith growing strong; I initiate myself to the life of God by feeding upon the truth, which is His own divine food. The more I learn how to know Him, the more I learn how to love and serve Him. How many means of sanctification I find in my studies alone!

II. The different occupations of the ministry are so many channels through which I communicate to souls that living, sanctifying water which "springs up unto life eternal." (Joan. iv. 14.) Now, whilst I communicate grace to my brethren, I can continually increase its precious treasure within myself. Not to mention charity and other virtues which I practice, such as meekness, patience, mortification, etc. How can the priest visit the sick, preach the word of God, administer the sacraments, without finding in every action or occurrence some means of sanctification for himself? The dying speak to me of death; I shall soon call

for the same spiritual attendance that they have received at my hands. The truths which I proclaim from the pulpit concern myself as much as my hearers. The reconciliation of sinners reminds me of the mercy of God and of the need I have of it. When a priest gives due attention to the works of His ministry, everything hastens his progress in virtue.

III. The trials of life are for the priest another source of sanctification. Do they come from creatures, the ingratitude, the malice of man? They disengage and purify his heart. They teach him to rely upon God alone. Does God Himself try His priest by interior crosses? The more painful they are, the farther they advance the work of his perfection, when he bears them with patience and love. "For whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth: and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." (Heb. xii. 6.) The same may be said of temptations, since in the designs of God they are intended to increase the treasure of His merits. "He will also make with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) From his very falls the priest may draw some advantage, for they will give him a more intimate knowledge of his own profound misery and of the touching mercy of God. "And we know that to them who love God, all things work together unto good." (Rom. viii. 28.)

IV. God in His wisdom and great goodness for the priest has placed for him the most powerful means of sanctification in the very things which oblige him to be perfect.

We are required to be perfect because we are mediators, and because in this capacity it belongs to us to offer public prayers; but now, what is more apt to unite us to God than those frequent familiar conversations He permits us to hold with His infinite Majesty, whilst we offer Him the homages and prayers of the whole Church? Let us confess that holiness is demanded of him who approaches the Most High; but, on the other hand, who can come near to the very source of light without being enlightened, or to the "consuming fire" without being inflamed, or to the adorable physician without being healed from all infirmity?

We are desired to be holy because we are sacrificers, because we offer to God the most holy of all victims; but would not one Mass well celebrated make us divine beings?

Again, we must be holy because we are the instruments of God in the sanctification of souls; but in this again what do we do for our brethren that we do not for ourselves? Let us confess we are not wanting in means to raise us to sacerdotal perfection; but we want vigilance to see them and courage to use them properly.

Second Point.—The good priest neglects no means of sanctification. The priest considers a slight increase in divine charity as something invaluable. He knows that to the least act of supernatural virtue, practised by the just, there corresponds a degree of grace in time and of glory in eternity, blessings which partake of the infinite itself. He turns to account all great and slight occasions of merit. As there is nothing small in the service of the great God, he is always careful to do well all that he does, and to take advantage of everything for his own sanctification. In the pulpit he applies to himself the truths which he preaches, and encourages himself in exhorting others. In the holy tribunal his faith is aroused when he sees the wonders of grace of which he is the instrument or the witness. He humbles himself in presence of some souls which give him lessons of spiritual life, of fear, of love of God. How many treasures may be amassed in one day by the priest, attentive and obedient to the inspiration of his conscience! How many acts of self-abnegation he practises in caring for the children or the sick, and during his long sittings in the confessional! Who can tell all the blessings he draws upon himself and the Church by his piety in reciting the Office, celebrating the divine sacrifice? Though he lived but a few days, it might be said of the fervent priest that his career was a long one. "Being made perfect in a short space, he fulfilled a long time." (Sap. iv. 13.)

Thou art not, O my God, a hard master, as the wicked servant of the Gospel said. Thou dost not reap where Thou didst not sow. I know that Thou dost expect much of Thy ministers; but Thou makest easy for them the attainment of the holiness which Thou demandest of them. If I lose my soul I shall be obliged to acknowledge that I was lost by my own fault, by abusing Thy divine grace. O Jesus, since Thy ear heareth the "preparation of the heart," since Thou "fillest the hungry with good things," do Thou unite and entertain in me holy desires. At this very moment, through an effect of Thy mercy, I desire to receive Thee at the holy altar with all the fervor of which I am capable. Oh, come; kindle in my heart an ever-growing zeal for my sanctification. Give me that ardent thirst after holiness which Thou considerest Thyself as the principle of true happiness. "Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice." Give me grace also, O Lord, to communicate it to others, and I will cry out with Thy prophet, "All you that thirst, come to the waters, and you that have no money, make haste, buy, and eat." (Is. lv. 1.)

Résumé of the Meditation

First Point.—The good priest finds in everything means of sanctification. The study of sacred learning keeps away from him a thousand dangerous occasions, strengthens his faith; gives him a clearer knowledge of God, teaches him to love and serve Him better every day. Whilst communicating divine grace to his brethren, he can, if he will, continually increase that treasure of grace for himself. The trials of life, wherever they come from, are a most efficacious means of sanctification. He finds in the discharge of his duties an abundant source of heavenly blessings.

Second Point.—The good priest neglects no means of sanctification. A slight increase in divine charity is something invaluable in his estimation. He neglects no occasion, either small or great. He keeps his soul always disposed to do well what he has to do. How many acts of charity, of meekness, does he not practise in the confessional, in the midst of children, near the sick-bed.

MEDITATION XV.

RECOLLECTION, A GENERAL MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION. IT BEGINS IT.

1.—*By Drawing us Near to God.*
2.—*By Discarding Many Temptations.*
3.—*By Preserving us from Sin.*

First Point.—Recollection draws us near to God. It is the first step of a soul which returns from the state of sin to that of grace, from a tepid life to one of fervor.

What causes the return of the prodigal to his father's house, and the return of the sinner to virtue? Both feel attracted to reflect in one of those moments when God speaks to their troubled conscience. "Return, ye transgressors, to the heart." (Is. xlvi. 8.) They follow the attraction, recollect themselves; behold, they have become themselves again, their faith has revived. "Entering into himself." (Luc. xv. 17.) Their eyes are opened; they see the world, pleasures, affairs, life and death, as they are in reality. They see their errors, they acknowledge their crimes. It is, as it were, an apparition of the holiness, justice, and goodness of God, which enlightens and startles them. The thought of His sanctity makes them blush for their sins; they deplore their ingratitude at the thought of His goodness. When they remember His justice they tremble in view of the dangers which threaten them. Gener-

ous resolutions follow such wise reflections, and great sinners oftentimes become great saints. Recollection it was which commenced the work.

Here is a soul which once was fervent, and now has become lukewarm. Let her employ the same remedy; it will also succeed in her case. Let her enter into herself in presence of Him who said, "I would thou wert cold or hot: but because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." (Ap. iii. 15.) Let her ponder that terrible saying, let her consider where the man falls whom God has rejected; she will then, if docile to divine grace, rise out of her fatal slumber, and restore to God all her love.

Second Point.—Recollection keeps away many temptations. Recollection consists in recalling within ourselves, our imagination, our memory, the faculties of our soul which were scattered abroad, in order to apply them to God and divine things. To live in recollection consists in keeping our soul in a quiet, yet continual attention to the operations of grace, in order to obey them, and to watch the motions of nature in order to direct or repress them. Such is the soul that is detached from creatures, and that seeks God, His will, His desires, in order to obey them. We can easily understand how many temptations are kept away from us by means of that interior recollection which the saints were able to practise in the midst of numberless occupations.

To the man who lives in a state of recollection St. Gregory applies the following beautiful passage of Isaias: "He . . . that stoppeth his ears lest he hear blood, and shutteth his eyes that he may see no evil. He shall dwell on high, the fortifications of rocks shall be his highness." (Is. xxxiii. 15, 16.)

A light, unguarded soul runs continually out of itself through the gates of its senses; it is always on the lookout for some natural satisfaction. As it longs to see and hear everything, its heart is open to all kinds of impressions. Its mind is filled with vain ideas and false judgments, and hardly distinguishes what conscience forbids from what it authorizes. It throws itself incautiously into a thousand dangerous occasions. It goes, as it were, to meet temptation.

But the prudent, thoughtful soul has "made the Most High its refuge, there shall no evil come to it." (Ps. xc. 9, 10.)

As it seldom loses the remembrance of Him who is the adorable witness of all its thoughts and affections, it reads in His countenance that which He approves and also what He condemns; it learns from Him the way which it should follow. It watches over its imagination and senses. "Death doth not

come up through the windows nor enter into its house." (Jer. ix. 21.)

Third Point.—Recollection preserves us from sin. The more perfect is that virtue in us, the more pure is our life. Sin is a work of darkness, of weakness; it is an error, a falling away. What will be the remedy? We need *light* and *strength*. A man who reflects, who checks the vagaries of his own mind, enjoys the full exercise of his reason and of his faith—he is under the influence of truth, not of delusion. He sees sin where it is, though it may be disguised, and he sees it such as it is in its hateful deformity. The reason is that such a man sees God in a manner; he sees His greatness, His power, His justice, and His goodness. "His eyes shall see the King in His beauty." (Is. xxxiii. 17.)

Oh, what beautiful light illuminates the soul when it remembers God present to itself, God who appreciates our most secret intentions! God is here, He sees me, He judges me. I feel sustained and strengthened by this remembrance of the presence of God. As soon as a soul, well recollected, discovers temptation, it exclaims in its holy indignation, "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) Could I sin under His very eyes? Could I rebel against Him who has so many claims to my obedience?

But sin, alas, becomes too easy, when recollection gives way to dissipation of mind. This is why the Scriptures generally ascribe our falling into sin to a forgetfulness of God, and our perseverance in virtue to a remembrance of His presence. "Thou hast forgotten Me," and hence came upon you that deluge of crimes which I have had to punish by a deluge of calamities. In this manner, also, does Daniel explain the daring crime of two lustful old men. "They perverted their own minds and turned away their eyes, that they might not look out on heaven, nor remember just judgments." (Dan. xiii. 9.) The same cause is assigned by David to all the crimes of the wicked. They forget the dreadful avenger of all iniquity, and therefore "their ways are filthy at all times." (Ps. x. 5.) But as to me, "I have kept Thy commandments and Thy testimonies, because all my ways are in Thy sight." (Ps. cxviii. 168.)

Every day, O Lord, I, with Thy prophet, envy the blessedness of those who pass their life in perfect innocence. "Blessed are the undefiled in the way. Who shall ascend into the mountain of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? The innocent in hands and clean of heart." (Ps. xxiii. 3, 4.) This advantage I will enjoy, O my God, and my soul will become a temple less unworthy of Thy presence, if I know how to practise habitual

recollection. I will then avoid, as far as I can, all that might disturb the sacred seclusion of my soul, tempering my zeal itself when it will tend to make me forget Thy presence. In vain, however, shall I watch if Thou wilt not please to guard my mind and my heart. "Keep me as the apple of Thy eye." (Ps. xvi. 8.) "Set me beside Thee, and let any man's hand fight against me." (Job xvii. 3.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Recollection draws us nearer to God. It is the first step of a soul which returns from the state of sin to the state of grace, or from tepidity to fervor. The prodigal enters into himself and his eyes are opened. The same would happen a soul which has lost its fervor. Let her recollect herself in order to ponder over the oracle, "I would thou wert cold or hot; but because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." She would also wake out of her fatal slumber.

Second Point.—Recollection keeps away from us many temptations. Recollection consists in keeping one's self in a quiet yet continuous attention to the inspirations of grace in order to obey them, and in watching over those of nature in order to direct or repress them. A light, unguarded soul runs continually out of itself, looking for some natural gratification. She goes, in fact, to meet temptation.

Third Point.—Recollection preserves us from sin. It puts in the soul light and strength, two powers which triumph over sin; for sin is a work of darkness and weakness. God is here! He sees me! This thought imparts to me strength and light. The Scripture ascribes our fall into sin to forgetfulness of God, and our perseverance to a remembrance of His presence.

MEDITATION XVI.

HAPPY STATE OF THE PRIEST WHO LIVES IN RECOLLECTION.

1.—*He Makes Rapid Progress in Holiness.*

2.—*His Happiness Somewhat Resembles that of Heaven.*

First Point.—**Recollection makes us advance rapidly in holiness**; through the graces which it draws down upon us, the good works and merits which it multiplies, and the virtues which we practise under its influence.

I. The heart of God is a treasure of inexhaustible goodness, and as He delights in enriching us with His gifts, He Himself invites us to ask for them, and He showers them upon us with unlimited liberality, when He sees us disposed not simply to accept them, but also to use them according to the designs of His paternal providence. But now, what disposition can be more potent in obtaining the help of God, or turning it to account, than that interior solitude of soul which seeks to be alone with God, for no other end but to adore, to bless and invoke Him? Such a soul may be said to be always praying, since its mind and heart are always communing with God. It ever asks and ever receives, for it prays with attention, respect, confidence and love. This is why the Church, which relies so much on the public prayers of her ministers, wishes them to prepare for it by an act of recollection. *Aperi, Domine, etc.*

Oh, how sweet to the priest who lives recollected under the eyes of God is the obligation to recite the Office! What an abundant source of spiritual blessings! Being once in full possession of myself through my recollection, I find heart to pray. I have no more need to search for it.

A man ever absorbed by exterior occupation can hardly distinguish the heavenly light presented to him; or he allows it to pass away from him, with the utmost indifference; but God willingly gives His grace to the attentive mind, which at once perceives and appreciates it, and to the pure heart ever ready to follow its inspirations.

II. Recollection, through the grace it confers, multiplies our good works, or rather it endows our works with a supernatural character. When we say to ourselves, God sees me, He will be pleased if I try to please Him, this thought banishes languor from the soul, purifies its intentions, inflames it with love, and this is the disposition which gives so much value to our most ordinary actions. We are then scarcely tempted to lose all merit by acting through merely natural motives, whilst in doing the same thing for the honor of God we may acquire a treasure of merits which will be rewarded in heaven.

III. Through recollection we become detached from creatures, and acquire a distaste for everything earthly. Who is foolish enough to gather up dust when he has diamonds before him? What is earth to one who looks up to heaven? "The sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared with the glory of the world to come." (Rom. viii. 18.) Through recollection also we obtain an ardent zeal for the salvation of souls; entire conformity to the will of God, and finally that life of faith, which, being a

continual exercise of all solid virtues, is the essence of true righteousness, and enables us to acquire its perfection. How can one be so blind as to fear an interior solitude where no one is to be found but Thou, O my God, as if in Thee alone we did not possess all blessings!

Second Point.—Recollection makes us enjoy a happiness that is somewhat like that of heaven. The saints of heaven possess in their fulness, perfect innocence, unalterable rest, and sovereign joy, which is the joy of God Himself, and we on earth by recollection obtain a participation in these blessings.

First of all, nothing defiled can enter heaven; sin is impossible in heaven; because God is beheld there face to face in the fulness of His infinite beauty. On earth also, the thought of God present to us, unveiling a few rays of His glory, makes it, as it were, impossible to offend Him, fear and love combining to prevent us doing anything displeasing to Him.

As in heaven there is nothing to disturb the rest of the elect, because God Himself "keepeth the city" wherein they dwell, so also is the soul of the just; the thought of God's presence quiets their passions, banishes useless, troublesome desires, puts an end to our alarms. What can I fear when I remember that the Almighty is always at my side, with the affection of a father, the tenderness of a mother, protecting me "with His good will as with a shield." A pious anchorite having been asked what was the cause of the serenity always perceived in his countenance, answered, "I possess God, I possess Him entire; no one can deprive me of my treasures."

St. Basil is threatened with exile, and he answers without the least emotion, "'The earth and the fulness thereof is the Lord's.' Should they send me to the most distant, barbarous country, I would still find there the best of my friends, for God would be with me."

But here is the very height of happiness for a soul attentive to the presence of God. The Saviour having exhorted us to abide in His love, as we do through recollection, adds immediately, "These things have I spoken to you, that my joy may be in you and your joy may be filled." (Joan. xv. 11.) In fact, interior recollection leads us to that favored intimacy with the Lord which gives a foretaste of the felicity of heaven. St. Augustine, who speaks of it by experience, said: "He who abides in Thee, O my God, by the spirit of recollection, enters into the joy of his Lord; he shall have nothing to fear, it shall be well with him, dwelling as he does in God, infinitely good."

Read over and meditate some time upon the first chapter of the second book of the "Imitation of Jesus Christ." "Learn to

despise exterior things, and give thyself to the interior, and thou shalt see the kingdom of God come into thee. The kingdom of God is peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. . . . Christ will come to thee discovering to thee His consolation, if thou wilt prepare Him a fit dwelling within thyself. . . . Frequently doth He visit the internal man, sweet is the communication with Him, delightful His consolation, much peace and familiarity exceedingly to be admired. . . . Make room then for Christ within thee and deny entrance to all others."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Recollection hastens our progress toward perfection. Almighty God willingly bestows His favors upon those who ask them, and whom He sees prepared to profit by them. A recollected soul is always disposed to pray, to pray rightly, and to turn to account the rich talent of grace.

God sees me. He will be pleased if I endeavor to seek His glory in all that I do. Such is the habitual thought of recollected prayers. Will it not lead them surely to perfection? Through recollection we obtain detachment from creatures, patience in trials, conformity to God's will, the life of faith which is the life of the just.

Second Point.—Recollection makes us enjoy a happiness which somewhat resembles the happiness of heaven. Nothing defiled enters heaven, nothing defiled enters the soul of those who live under the eyes of God. In heaven there is perpetual rest. What can disturb me when I think that God almighty, God my Father, is always near me ready to defend me? In heaven there is joy, the sovereign joy of God Himself; recollection introduces me to that intimacy with God, which is a communication of His own happiness, and a foretaste of the felicity of heaven.

MEDITATION XVII.

UNHAPPY STATE OF A PRIEST WHO IS NOT RECOLLECTED.

1.—*His Life is Useless.*
2.—*It is Full of Sorrows.*
3.—*It is Full of Dangers.*

First Point.—The life of a priest without recollection is useless, and he shall be condemned for the good which he neglects to do, supposing he were not punished for his evil actions.

The branch can not bear fruit except inasmuch as it remains attached to the vine; if I separate from Jesus Christ I condemn myself to entire sterility. For He is the vine, and I am the branch. Do I not separate myself from Him, and refuse to partake of His life-giving grace, when I banish Him from my mind, allowing creatures to occupy His place; when I oppose myself to the interior direction He wishes to impart to me? Listen, O my soul, and understand the oracle of the Son of God: "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit. . . . If any one abide not in Me, he shall be cast forth as a branch and shall wither, and they shall gather him up and cast him into the fire, and he burneth." (Joan. xv. 5, 6.) The same truth is inculcated in the following sharp address of the Lord to Ezekiel the prophet: "Son of man, what shall be made of the wood of the vine? . . . shall wood be taken of it to do any work, or shall a pin be made of it, for any vessel to hang thereon? Behold, it is cast into the fire for fuel." (Ez. xv. 2, 3, 4.) For him, says St. Augustine, there is no other alternative—either the *vine* or the *fire*. Behold a sad but truthful image of the disappointed priest. Such a priest can be of no use in the hands of the Lord, for accomplishing His designs of mercy, though he has been chosen from among thousands for that very end. He has not now the power of the rod of Moses to cause water to flow from the rocks, and to touch the hearts of hardened sinners; he has not the virtue of the staff of Eliseus to bring back sinners to the life of grace. These are not, moreover, the only duties of the pastoral office. We are the masters and doctors of spiritual life. To us it belongs to guide souls in the way of perfection. Shall we be able to accomplish this unless we tend to perfection ourselves?

The priest who is not recollected is incapable of exercising the holy ministry. He belongs, unconsciously perhaps, to that numerous class of men who have no understanding, says the prophet, or whose understanding is vain, because they do not employ it to seek God. "They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together" (Ps. xiii. 3); of no use for the glory of the Lord, for the sanctification of souls, they are of no use to themselves. "And I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength without cause and in vain." (Is. xlix. 4.)

Second Point.—The life of a mentally dissipated priest is full of sorrows. Not being able to find in exterior objects the comfort he expected to find therein, he remains always restless and tormented. Like the billows dashing against the rocks and thrown back by them into the sea, the soul of the mentally dissipated priest, finding in itself nothing but shame and remorse,

strives as it were to fly from itself, and goes about seeking rest and peace amongst creatures; but all in vain, he is condemned to find no rest or comfort either in himself or amongst created objects. "This is a punishment of Thy justice, O my God," says St. Augustine, "and also a punishment of Thy mercy; that he who leaves Thee to seek in creatures a happiness which Thou alone canst give, finds nothing instead but pain and affliction, and that his sin becomes his very torment." If this be true of all men, what shall we say of the Christian, of the priest? Let blindness be ever so great, still one may have some few lucid intervals. Dissipation of mind in the priest can not be so continual but that he will sometimes think on the sublime dignity and terrible responsibility of the priesthood. Must he not of necessity reproach himself bitterly when he compares what he is with what he ought to be, when he remembers the grace which he receives, and his abuse of the same, when he thinks of the offices entrusted to him and of the account he shall render to Thee? When the recollected priest has trials or contradictions he finds comfort in almighty God Himself. How easily trouble is dispelled and forgotten by a devout meditation, a fervent celebration of Mass or some other ecclesiastical function! But whenever the soul of the good priest finds comfort and joy, there the soul of the mentally dissipated priest finds naught but bitterness and anguish. "Destruction and unhappiness are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known." (Ps. xiii. 3.)

Third Point.—The life of a mentally dissipated priest is full of dangers. As dissipation of mind withdraws from us the light of faith, our soul remains in darkness, deprived of the strength of which faith is the principle. It keeps away the graces which God intended to give us, and prevents us from turning to account those we have received. It opens the heart to every seduction, and gives it up defenceless to the spirit of darkness; it is a preparation for every sin, and for final obduracy in sin. Can we conceive of a state more alarming? Without recollection my religious exercises are either neglected or badly performed. If I do not pray, or do not pray rightly, I dry up the source of divine blessings; vigor is wanting in all my ministrations. I am incapable of nourishing the souls committed to my care; and not to nourish them is to kill them. I am the barren fig tree which the Lord has cursed, the branch separated from the vine, which has been cast away. Behold, I am now placed beyond the care of that special providence which God delights to exert over His good priests. I am not now protected and sanctified by those special graces which are the reward of fidelity. Ah, how much I ought

to fear the fulfilling of the terrible threat, "When they shall be scattered, they shall perish." (Job vi. 17.)

In order to escape this calamity, Cease, O my soul, to wander about amongst sensuous, material objects, for nothing is to be found amongst them but folly, deception, and vanity. Re-enter within thyself, return to thy God. Thou shalt find in Him that which thou canst not find amongst creatures; for He, being the sovereign Good, how could He not be the inexhaustible source of all consolation? Return, poor, stray little dove, return to Noah, re-enter the ark; fly back again to the heart of Jesus; there alone thou shalt be safe. Ah, how dearly already thou hast had to pay for thine imprudence in quitting this asylum! Renounce the hunger, the anguish, the sorrows which thou didst experience since thou left the ark, and make haste to re-enter it.

Come back to Jesus Christ; He will offer thee His hand, and give thee kind welcome; in order to repair thy lost strength, He will give thee the bread of heaven. For him who leads a worldly life there is naught but temptations and dangers; but all is security, grace, holiness, and happiness for the soul which lives in holy recollection, which does not abandon its interior life, or which, like the dove, makes haste to re-enter it.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The life of the mentally dissipated priest is a useless life. He shall be condemned for the good he omits to perform, as well as for the sins he commits. To him apply the words of the prophet, "They are all gone aside, they are become unprofitable together," not procuring the glory of God, the sanctification of others or their own.

Second Point.—The life of a mentally dissipated priest is a life full of sorrows. This is a punishment of Thy justice, O my God, and also a punishment of Thy mercy, that he who goes away from Thee to seek in creatures a happiness which Thou alone canst give, finds nothing instead but pain and affliction, and then his sin becomes his torment. Is it possible not to think of eternity, or not to compare what one ought to be with what one really is?

Third Point.—The life of a priest who has no spirit of recollection is a life full of dangers. Dissipation deprives us of light and of strength by keeping away the thought of faith from our minds. It opens the heart to all seductions. It leads to the commission of sin and to final impenitence.

MEDITATION XVIII.

EXERCISES OF PIETY A MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

1.—*How Much the Good Priest Esteems Them.*
2.—*How He Manifests that Esteem.*

First Point.—The good priest has a great esteem for exercises of piety because of the great blessings he derives from them. Those blessings are spiritual, supernatural, and eternal, and they are therefore infinitely superior to those which belong merely to the narrow circle of time and matter. The great Suarez did not exaggerate the importance of religious exercises when he declared that he would rather forget all his theological learning than lose a quarter of an hour's conversation with God in holy meditation. By this the great theologian taught us to appreciate at their true value the acts of faith, hope, charity, adoration, self-annihilation before God, and other similar operations of the soul which occupy the time of that exercise. He knew whither these different acts may lead us, and also what reward they deserve for this present life and for eternity. He knew how much each of these holy thoughts or impressions had cost Our Lord Jesus Christ, and also all those graces poured down upon us with so much liberality when we seriously perform our religious exercises.

The blessings which we derive from meditation, pious reading, examinations, etc., being of a supernatural order, possess over the goods of nature three advantages which are really invaluable. To desire them is a blessing—this desire brings them down to us, it makes their possession more agreeable.

I. In the case of natural goods, as desire supposes privation, it becomes the torment of the heart just as hunger and thirst are the tortures of the body; but when there is question of the gifts of grace, the desire to possess them is in itself a great blessing, because it is a great virtue, a noble inclination of the soul which seeks God, the principle and source of all that is truly good. As this desire makes us better men by drawing us near unto our end and beginning, we need not wonder that the soul finds her repose therein; but the desire of terrestrial goods, nearly always connected with sin, can not bring it anything but sorrow and suffering!

II. Behold another notable difference between spiritual goods and those of nature. The affection we have for the latter does not confer them upon us. One is not learned because he wishes

to have learning. The desire of riches does not make one rich; but if I "hunger and thirst after justice," I shall be replenished therewith. If I ardently desire that which makes a man just and holy, I draw down within myself justice and holiness. How so? Because I pray; for prayer, in fact, is simply a sincere, holy desire. The "preparation of the heart," that is what God heareth. "He has filled the hungry with good things." "The Lord hath heard the desire of the poor. Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." (Ps. ix. 17.) What did the Wise Man do to obtain understanding? "I wished, and understanding was given me." (Wis. vii. 7.)

III. The desire of spiritual goods increases the pleasures connected with possession of them. One soon becomes tired of the goods of the natural order. They are so powerless to fill up the immense void of our heart. We never tire of the pure joys annexed to spiritual gifts. On the contrary, the longer we possess them, the more we desire to possess them. In their case satiety does not allay hunger, and hunger increases the pleasure of satiety in place of diminishing it. We now understand the Apostle of the Indies when exclaiming: "It is enough, O Lord, it is enough." Behold the pleasure of having: "yet more, O Lord, yet more;" behold the continuity of desire. We may with due proportion say of the just on earth what St. Augustine said of the blessed in heaven, "Always satisfied, yet always craving."

The happiness of the elect consists in divine union in its highest state of perfection; but our religious exercises well performed begin that union on earth, and are as a prelude, an apprenticeship of the eternal beatitude. Who then can esteem them too highly?

Second Point. — The good priest shows his estimation of religious exercises by his exactitude to perform them all, and his application to perform them well.

I. Far from seeking for pretexts to dispense him from performing his religious exercises, the good priest feels grieved when he has to omit or to abridge any of them. He so regulates his time, and uses such caution, that nothing may prevent him from attending to them in due order. These, indeed, are nothing but means which we should love only in view of the end; we should not hesitate to leave God for God, and the quietness of contemplation for the fatigues of action, when the sovereign Master commands it. Say now, however, in all sincerity, whether it is always for God's glory that you omit or neglect those salutary exercises, of which the necessity was so clearly demonstrated to you during the time of your clerical education? We take for our sleep and our meals all the time requisite to repair our bodily strength;

should we show less esteem for the exercise of meditation, the preparation for Mass, thanksgiving after it? Has not our soul some lost strength to recruit? Can it afford to do without its spiritual refection any more than the body without its material bread? It is ourselves alone that we injure when we shorten the time of our conversation with God. Do we not at the same time interfere with the interest of our neighbor, and the glory of Him "who hates robbery in the holocaust"? "I am the Lord who love judgment, and hate robbery in the holocaust." The good priest performs his religious exercises exactly; he will devote to them all the time that has been prescribed, an imperative necessity alone being excepted.

II. He performs them with all the affection of which he is capable, either when he listens to God speaking to him in spiritual reading, or when he himself speaks to God at the time of prayer. Before these exercises he fails not to use the remote and the proximate preparation, and attends to them with an attentive mind and docile heart. He hereby acquires the spirit of faith, of detachment and fervor, and qualifies himself more and more every day to become in the hands of our merciful God a fit instrument of salvation to others.

I again bind myself, and now irrevocably, to attend to my religious exercises always, and with as much perfection as possible. In the morning, during my meditation, I will make an abundant provision of spiritual recollection which will guard me during the day against dangerous impressions from exterior objects. Being already united to God through meditation, I shall yet become more intimately united to Him at the holy altar, and after leaving the sanctuary, inflamed with the fire of divine charity, I will attend courageously to all my duties, such as study, administration of the sacraments, works of zeal, recitation of the Holy Office. By a short examination at noon, a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, spiritual reading through the day, and a serious examination of conscience before retiring to rest, I will make up for the losses sustained in my intercourse with the world; my fervor will receive a new life, and my resolutions will become stronger. Should I feel tempted to omit my exercises, to abridge them or perform them with a distracted mind, I will remember the words of Jesus Christ, and will say to the tempter wherever he may happen to be, "I must be about the things of my Father."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest greatly esteems the exercises of piety. The blessings which we derive from meditation, pious

readings, examinations, etc., being of a supernatural order, possess over the goods of nature three advantages which are really invaluable. To desire them is a blessing; this desire brings them down to us; it makes the possession of them more pleasant. This desire is a great blessing because it is a great virtue, a noble inclination of the soul which seeks God and wishes to be united to Him. That desire of spiritual goods brings them down to us, because it is an efficacious prayer; it is only such desires that God is pleased to hear. This desire makes the possession of them more agreeable. We become tired of other goods; the more we possess spiritual goods, the more we desire to possess them. These goods are the sovereign good—God Himself.

Second Point.—The good priest shows his esteem for religious exercises by his exactitude to perform them all, and his application to perform them rightly. He therefore rejects all pretexts for omitting them; and again he uses every means which may render the mind attentive and the heart ready to obey, such as remote and proximate preparation before holy meditation, and the other pious practices.

MEDITATION XIX.

NEGLIGENCE IN EXERCISES OF PIETY.

1.—*We should be on our Guard against the Pretexts with which it Clothes Itself.*

2.—*We should Fear the Consequences of Negligence in Religious Exercises.*

First Point.—Pretexts alleged for negligence in pious exercises. There are so many advantages to be found in prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and it is such an honor to be permitted to attend to them, that we can hardly conceive how a good priest could neglect them; for what are they but means to converse with God, to draw His blessings upon us?

Pretexts, however, are not wanting. The excuse is given, for instance, that one must attend first of all to the duties of his state. A pastor is overburdened with occupations that he can not neglect, such as study, ministrations, visits of charity, works of zeal. "How could he attend to everything?" But in your inability to attend to everything, should you sacrifice that which is more important to that which is less so? Is there wisdom or reason in this? What can there be of more importance for me than to save my soul? What can I do of greater import

to my neighbor than to qualify myself to procure his salvation? But these two things I will accomplish by fidelity in performing my exercises. Can I acquire spiritual life if I neglect the exercises which belong to it? Are not light and grace attached to meditation in prayer, in my case as well as in that of the layman? Am I to expect that a knowledge of the mysteries of interior life will be infused into my soul, or should not I rather look for that science in pious readings and wise reflections? If I know not my sins and do not excite myself to sorrow for them, can I hope to obtain such contrition as will reconcile me to God?

The necessity of studying is alleged. The importance of study is certainly very great in our days for a priest; but it is still more important for the apostolic man to be holy than to be learned. "Love learning," says St. Augustine, "but prefer charity." Our natural talents, our acquired knowledge, all should be placed under the direction of grace to accomplish the work of God; let us therefore seek grace first and everything that brings it to us.

Zeal, works of zeal are brought forward as an excuse; is it zeal, or rather immortification which makes me find the short moments too long that are passed in presence of God and of myself?

We desire to do good. So did the apostles, and what did they do in consequence of that desire? Did they abridge the exercise of prayer in order to give more time to the functions of their ministry, a ministry which in their case was so extensive and so visibly blessed by God? No, they gave up the care of the poor, dear as that was to the Church, in order to give themselves exclusively to two works of zeal, prayer and preaching. "But we"—behold the mission of the priest—"will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." (Acts vi. 4.)

Prayer before preaching, the cause before the effect. "In vain does the voice of the doctor sound in our ears, if God be not in his heart to teach him." (St. Gregory.) "O Priests, you are the ministers of the God of hosts; you must continually ascend and descend the spiritual ladder like the angels whom Jacob saw in the wilderness. You ascend from earth to heaven when you unite your soul to God in prayer; you come down from heaven upon earth when you bring to men the commands of God and His word." (Bossuet.)

Is it not strange that, in order to neglect our holy intercourse with God, we bring forward as pretexts the very reasons which demand of us to be faithful to the exercise of prayer? Is it of ourselves that we expect the success of our studies, of our minis-

trations, of our apostolic labors? Do we sincerely believe in the words of Jesus Christ, "Without Me you can do nothing"? Will almighty God grant us in our presumption and tepidity those graces which He promised only to our humble prayer, our efforts, and the oft-reiterated groanings of our hearts? It is between Himself and us, at the time of prayer, that the affair of men's salvation is treated of.

Second Point.—Sad effects of negligence in religious exercises. Dom Barthelemi of the martyrs said of the undevout bishop, "Woe to thee, bishop, if the fountain of devotion is dried up in thee." This calamity can not be avoided by any minister of the Lord who neglects his spiritual exercises. He has already become sadly remiss who omits or neglects his religious exercises under the slightest pretext, or who performs them without any desire of performing them well. A priest, however, can not keep his footing on an inclined plane, and owing to the false principles which he has adopted, to this spiritual blindness which goes on increasing, and to the action of God who withdraws from him, he shall soon have passed from tepidity to consummate obduracy.

It is painful for one to behold under his feet nothing but a yawning abyss; to hear from the interior of his conscience no answer but that of death. However, he will endeavor to convince himself that there is no harm in the mode of life which he has not the courage to renounce; he has now found the fatal secret of conciliating his conscience with his inclinations, of giving a new coloring to the most blamable actions. How far will he not go? It is easy to deceive ourselves when we so will it. Besides, God ends by treating us as we ourselves treat Him. He returns that ungrateful priest coldness for coldness, contempt for contempt. "Thou that despisest, shalt not thyself also be despised?" (Is. xxxiii. 1.) Love gives place to anger, and mercy to retribution. The light goes out and darkness becomes more dense. All sentiment of devotion is lost. How now about the functions of the ministry? Those functions which ought to be performed with angelical fervor, are gone through with indevotion, through a spirit of mere routine. Many, alas, are the priests of whom we may say with Massillon, "They go to the sacred altar as to a common table. That action, so dreaded by the good priest, is nothing more for them than one of those common actions which enter into the ordinary details of the day. The time of Mass is nothing more for them than the time of their business, of their meals, perhaps of their pleasures. That bread of heaven is nothing more for them than their earthly bread; that adorable

wine which purifies the heart and reanimates piety has no other effect than to increase their baleful lethargy."

St. Bernard, writing to Pope Eugenius, finds the cause of those misfortunes in the ardor with which men give themselves up wholly to exterior occupations, attaching hardly any importance to religious exercises, giving themselves up entirely to everything except to their own personal interests. Be assured that this vortex of affairs, if you continue to live in it and to neglect your interior spiritual life, will lead you whither you are unwilling to go.

Ah, my Lord, dost Thou not already inflict upon me those secret, dreadful retributions? Whence is it that I now so little feel the charms of Thy love and the remorse of my conscience? What has become of those lights which used to illuminate my mind? Where are the holy desires, the lively faith, the firm hope, the ardent charity, which in the days of my fervor, after my retreats, made me take rapid strides in the path of sacerdotal holiness?

Why does not my heart expand now as it did then under the unction of Thy graces? Alas, it is withered up like grass, because I neglected to nourish it with the bread of prayer and of holy meditations! My soul, deprived of the strength which it found in communing with Thee, has now been reduced to a state of baleful languor. O my God, take pity on me! Permit me not to slumber in the "sleep of death." I have deserved Thy anger, but I implore Thy mercy. If Thou art resolved to strike, chastise as a father, not as an enemy in his wrath. I did not, alas, appreciate as I ought the infinite honor of conversing with Thee. I was careless in my religious exercises, and whilst performing them I was guilty of a thousand irreverences which I now deplore, and which came very near causing my eternal loss. With the help of Thy grace, I will henceforth perform them with devotion, good will, and a sincere desire to please Thee, and thus I shall save my soul and contribute to Thy glory.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Pretexts for neglecting exercises of piety. Too many occupations. Because we can not attend to everything, should we sacrifice that which is more important to that which is less important? What is there more important for me than to save my soul, and for my neighbor than that I should qualify myself to save him? Necessity of studying. It is very great; but the importance of sanctifying one's self is greater. We wish to do good works. Think of the apostles. "We will give ourselves

continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." "Without Me ye can do nothing."

Second Point.—Sad effects of negligence in religious exercises. When a priest easily omits or abridges his exercises of piety, this first negligence may lead him to the bottom of the abyss. God ceases to love him, and punishes his tepidity by spiritual blindness and obduracy in sin.

MEDITATION XX.

THE FIRST OF ALL THE EXERCISES OF PIETY FOR A PRIEST—THE DIVINE OFFICE. ITS EXCELLENCE.

1.—*In Itself.*
2.—*In the Elements which Compose It.*
3.—*In the Circumstances of its Recitation.*

First Prelude.—Recall to mind Father Olier's engraving representing the sacred psalmody. Under the figure of David there is represented the Son of God, on whom the Holy Ghost pours down the plenitude of His gifts. He sings on His harp the praises of His Father, and He invites two choirs of ecclesiastics placed on a lower plane to unite themselves to Him. These have also their instruments of music, and they unite their canticles to those of Jesus Christ, who is the only praise of the Divinity.

Second Prelude.—Beg of God to make you understand the excellence of this function, and to grant you grace to fulfil it worthily.

First Point.—Excellence of the breviary in itself. St. Benedict gives it the beautiful name of *opus Dei*, the work of God. The work of God does not consist precisely in fastings, austerities, or prayers prolonged through entire nights; the work of God, the one which is the object of His complacency in heaven and on earth, in this present world and in the world to come, the work is the singing of His praise. The Church calls it the *Divine Office*. It is her authentic prayer; she has regulated all its parts, and obliges her ministers to recite it. It is her universal prayer; the voice of the East, the voice of the West. From all parts of the world it ascends to heaven, offering up to God the homage of all creatures. It is her continuous prayer; at each moment of the day and night it rises up to God like the odor of sweet incense. It is, as it were, the vital breathing of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and we, O Priests, are the organs of that body. It is connected with and relates to the sacrifice of our altars, being a preparation for

it and a thanksgiving after it. It has the same ends as the Mass; by it we adore God, return Him thanks, make atonement for sin and obtain all blessings; and on this account it is called a sacrifice. "The sacrifice of praise will honor Me."

In the recitation of the breviary, as well as at the altar, I am the delegate of the Church, her vicegerent, in order to treat with God of the interests of the whole Christian society. I thank Him for the victories of the Church triumphant, I alleviate and shorten the evils of the Church suffering, I assist the Church militant in her trials. O Priest, the whole universe is under thy care! Thou art, in the eyes of God, the father and mediator of all. Humble thyself at the thought of thy past transgressions. What should he be who stands intercessor for the whole world? But on the other hand, have confidence, remembering in whose name and fellowship thou presentest thyself before the infinite Majesty of the Lord. O my God! Thy Church it is who speaketh to Thee through my mouth. Do not consider my sins; remember her alone. Together with me there are now praying to Thee so many saintly souls, so many devoted religious, so many zealous, venerable priests and pontiffs. Was not Thy sanctuary at all times, is it not even now the land of the saints? Jesus, Thy Son, the head and soul of Thy Church, is praying with me, "ever living to make intercession for us." (Heb. vii. 25.) He is the chief priest at the altar. He is the principal suppliant in the public prayer.

Second Point.—Excellence of the breviary in the elements which compose it. What is the breviary but the word of God; Scripture and tradition placed in an order which itself comes from God; that word full of life and efficacy, a substantial ray of God's intelligence, inspired by the Spirit of God, who asks in us and for us "with unspeakable groanings." Oh, how effectively it fills our hearts with respect, confidence, and power; how powerfully it moves the heart of God favorably to hear our prayers!

When we recite the breviary we speak to God the language of God Himself; we make Him hear His own voice. Can there be any praises or prayers so pleasing to Him as those which He Himself condescended to teach and place Himself on our lips? Do we not find almost everywhere in the Psalms expressions of the sentiments of Jesus Christ?

What shall we say to the homilies of the Fathers, of that judicious selection of the most instructive and touching passages of their writings? We have legends of saints placing before our eyes models of holiness, and zealous protectors during our exile; then we have presented to us through the year, or in a series of tableaux, the mysteries of the faith, the combats and triumphs

of the Church. What a wealth of information for a pious priest! What a source of light, of pious affections!

Third Point.—Circumstances which accompany the recitation of the breviary. Who is he who offers this prayer to God? He is a man chosen, consecrated for that position, one who has grace to perform it. He has been separated from the multitude, freed from the care of earthly concerns in order to attend more perfectly to so important an occupation. He is the physician, the pastor, the father of souls, who is bound to pray for those who do not pray. What is the object of this prayer? The glory of God, whose incomprehensible perfections we can exalt in turn, closing our canticles by the doxology: "Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost." We pray for the prosperity of the Church, which expects great consolation from our piety in saying the breviary. We pray for peace between Christian princes, for the welfare of all mankind, and particularly for the salvation of the flock committed to our care. The good priest considers the Office a work of zeal. In whose presence and in whose company do we recite the Divine Office? In presence of the whole court of heaven, which gives thanks and prays with and for us. *In conspectu angelorum psallam tibi. Sancta Maria et omnes sancti intercedant pro nobis ad Dominum.* Behold us in community of praise and of prayer with the most noble and holy inhabitants of heaven! We recite the Office in presence of the devil, whom it irritates and who endeavors to disturb us whilst saying it. Finally, in the presence of God, to whom we offer the homage of all His creatures. *Cogitemus nos sub Dei conspectu stare; placendum est divinis oculis et habitu corporis et modo vocis.* (St. Cypr.) Where do we recite the Office? In this land of exile, in this region of the dead; in the midst of infidels who know not God, of heretics who have separated from Him by separating from His Church; of bad Christians, who slight Him by slighting His law; in the midst of that multitude of sinners who forget Him and never raise their eyes to heaven. Finally, when is it that we glorify God by reciting the Office? At a time when He is blasphemed, offended in a thousand ways, when wicked persons dare attack His holiness, His providence, His justice, His goodness, nay, His very existence! Ah, how sweet for a good priest thus to oppose adoration to outrage. We address our prayers to God when thousands of our brethren are in the throes of the death-agony and about to appear before the dread tribunal; when so many others are about to succumb to violent temptations; will we not go to their assistance, when we can do so, by reciting well our breviary?

Let us seriously reflect upon this obligation of ours, which is for many a cause of alarm at the moment of death. Let us be on our guard chiefly against routine and lukewarmness. Let us compare the past with the present; what we are now, with regard to the Holy Office, with what we were on the day of our ordination. Our dispositions also are much changed; but truth does not change.

In preparing for Mass, and after saying it, beseech Our Lord Jesus Christ to pour down again upon you, and upon all the priests, His spirit of grace and of prayer, that you may imitate the angels in the singing of praise and thanksgiving, and that after emulating their fervor in that divine function you may be associated with them in the beatitude of heaven.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Excellence of the breviary in itself. It is the work of God, *opus Dei*, the Divine Office. The prayer of the Church, its continuous universal prayer. It is as the vital breathing of the mystical body of Jesus Christ. It is a sacrifice of praise, having the same end as the sacrifice of the altar, to which it is related. When reciting the breviary, as well as when saying Mass, the priest is the deputy of the Church, triumphant, militant, and suffering.

Second Point.—Excellence of the breviary in the elements which compose it. It is almost exclusively the word of God, Scripture, and tradition. We make Him hear His own voice. In His Psalms we everywhere find Jesus Christ and the expression of His sentiments. What of the homilies of the Fathers, of the legends of saints; then that series of tableaux placing before our eyes the mysteries of faith, the combats and triumphs of the Church. What a source of light, of pious affections!

Third Point.—Circumstances which accompany the recitation of the breviary. Who is he who offers that prayer to God? What is its object? In whose presence, in what fellowship, at what time, do we offer up our homages and thanksgivings? O Priest, consider thyself as the emulator of the angels in that celestial function.

MEDITATION XXI.

THE BREVIARY—MOTIVES FOR RECITING IT RELIGIOUSLY.

1.—*The Rights of God and of the Church.*
2.—*The Welfare of Peoples.*
3.—*Our Own Interest.*

First Point.—To recite our Office religiously is a strict tribute we owe to God and the Church. Public prayer had already been commanded to the priesthood of the Old Law. But to the priests of the New Law this precept is given in terms more definite and energetic: *Districte præcipientes in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ, ut divinum officium, nocturnum pariter atque diurnum, studiose celebrent et devote.* (Lateran.)

It was fitting that the Church on earth should have some resemblance to the heavenly Jerusalem, and that the voices of the priests should form a perpetual concert of thanksgiving in honor of God, who pours down upon us continual benefactions. Hence comes the engagement required of us when we received subdeaconship, an engagement that we made with full deliberation and sincerity. Now, since the obligation of reciting the Office is laid upon me by sacred authority, *districte præcipientes in virtute sanctæ obedientiæ*, is it not evident that I am bound to recite it with respect and piety? Since I have bound myself to render to God a worship of adoration and prayer, I have bound myself to perform also those duties in a spirit of recollection and faith. "God is a spirit, and they that adore Him must adore Him in spirit and in truth." (Joan. iv. 24.) To recite those sacred canticles without respect and attention would be a derisive homage which God rejects and curses, stamped as it would be with the mark of indecency, perjury, and injustice. This would be to make a mockery of God, to betray our sacred oath, to deprive the infinite Majesty of God of a glory which belongs to and is dear to Him. Whilst violating the rights of God, such a priest would also violate the rights of the Church.

This sacred spouse of the Saviour has raised us to the rank of her ministers that we might represent her before Him. She has no voice of her own, and she borrows ours in order to pour out into the heart of her beloved Spouse her gratitude, her joys, her sorrows, her desires, and her fears; but will she acknowledge us as her vicegerents if we perform these functions without religious attention and sentiment? She languishes with love, as long as she

is separated from the divine object of her affections, finding no consolation but in expressing to Him the holy aspirations of her heart; and would I, the interpreter of her sentiments, would I dare to pronounce with a dissipated mind the sublime and burning expressions of her love? O Church of Jesus, how could thy intentions be more cruelly betrayed? When thou commissionest me to speak to God in thy name, thou undoubtedly willest that I should identify myself with thee, adopting thy dispositions, lending to thee my intelligence, my heart as well as my voice? Is this what I do?

Second Point.—The welfare of the people demands that I should recite the Holy Office religiously. The most important part of the priest's duty is to solicit the divine clemency in behalf of that great multitude of persons who do not pray at all, or who do so but seldom and imperfectly. "We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." St. Bernard reduces to three the obligations of the good shepherd: preaching, edification, prayer. Prayer, he adds, is the most important of the three. Jesus Christ Himself, announcing to His apostles that he has chosen them to be instruments of His mercy for the salvation of men, points to prayer as the most efficacious of all the means that they shall have to employ: "I have appointed you that you should go, . . . that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in My name, He may give it you." (Joan. xv. 16.)

Thousands of souls in the midst of dangers call upon us to give them the help which will save them from eternal loss, and that help which we owe them on so many grounds is the proper effect of the pious recitation of the breviary. In this manner we can save our brethren; but, without prayer, of what use would all our labors be to them? "Public prayer is the ordinary and the most faithful channel of all the graces which God pours down upon the nations. . . . It is, as it were, the soul of the priest's life; it constitutes all the efficacy and success of our ministry. . . . A pastor who does not pray is a dry channel, a cloud without water. But he who simply moves his lips, does not pray. . . . God hears the heart.

"The public destiny of the faithful of states and empires is, so to say, within our hands. When Aaron the High Priest sees a part of the people expiring, smitten by the strong arm of God, he casts himself between the dead and the living. He raises his hands to heaven, he sheds tears over the misfortune of the dead and wounded; he cries out, he supplicates, and his prayer is heard; the plague ceases, and the sword of God's anger is withdrawn." (Massillon.) (Num. xvi. 48.) The prayer of a good

pastor for his flock is never useless. Can we forget that there is a real compact between the priest and human society? They owe us our subsistence; but we owe to the people the suffrage of our prayers, our vigilance, and solicitude in the order of salvation.

Third Point.—Our most important interests demand that we should use particular care in the recitation of the breviary. Advantages of a fervent recitation of the Holy Office—sad effects of negligence in accomplishing this function.

I. The breviary when well recited enlightens our minds, protects us against sin, purifies us more and more, and increases admirably the amount of our merits.

Do you desire to be endowed with light from above? "Draw near unto Him." (Ps. xxxiii. 6.) But by saying the Divine Office I am permitted to speak to Him as friend to friend as often as seven times in the day. I also listen every day to the homilies of those Doctors of the Church who are filled with the Spirit of God, and I hereby can acquire an immense treasure of sacred learning.

From the very nature of my ministry I am under the double necessity of living amidst all kinds of corruption and of keeping myself perfectly pure. Who will defend me against dangers that are ever present? It will be the breviary which, at stated hours, withdraws me from all intercourse with the world, in order to place me in the presence of God. Oh, what a safe armor is prayer, and especially the public prayer of the Church!

But perhaps the dust of the world has adhered to my soul and soiled its beauty; then the sacrifice of praise, by its propitiatory virtue, will again make it pure and beautiful. The seven canonical hours, says St. Peter Damien, are in the Church as so many fountains, in which I can cleanse myself from those faults into which the just himself falls seven times in the day. By fervor in reciting the Office I can also multiply my titles to the rewards of heaven. See how many acts of humility, adoration, self-abnegation, and love of God can be made in the recitation of one Office! As often as I call back my wandering thought, or produce some pious affection, or pronounce some invocation, so often do I amass new merits for the blessed eternity. Moreover:

II. Should we not tremble when we think of the sad effects of negligence in reciting the Office? If I recite it badly, I deprive my people and all the Church of the graces they had a right to expect from my prayer. Such a one of my parishioners would have overcome temptation; but now he will yield to it. Another

one had been moved by a sermon or a good advice; he might have been wholly converted, but no, he will now draw no profit from those graces. And I, too, will labor in vain amongst my people; had I prayed well God would have blessed my efforts. Do I not know that I shall have to answer to Him for the evil I could have prevented, for the good I could have done, by using the means he had commanded me to employ?

Let us say, finally, that when negligence in saying the Office has become a habit, it is impossible to count up the number of transgressions which follow from it. The occasions of other sins are more rare. I have not every day the occasion to backbite, to fail in patience or meekness; but every day—aye, seven times every day—I have to perform an action which exposes me to commit numberless irreverences against the sovereign Majesty.

At the very beginning of the Holy Office I will recall to mind and dwell upon such thoughts as these: remember thou art an angel of earth—a mediator of the human race—a representative of the whole Church—thoughts so very proper to elevate my mind and preserve the fire of devotion. To-day, before and after Mass, I will offer to God, as a preparation and thanksgiving, all the pious sentiments, the acts of virtue of all the holy priests who have honored Him most in the recitation of the breviary. I will ask Him, through their intercession, grace fervently to accomplish an obligation, of which now, by His mercy, I understand all the importance.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God and the Church require us to recite the Divine Office well. This obligation has been laid down by lawful authority. *Districte præcipientes.* I therefore must recite it with respect and piety. I have bound myself to render to God a worship of adoration and prayer. I must consider myself as the deputy of the Church.

Second Point.—The welfare of peoples demands that we should recite the breviary religiously. Prayer is, according to St. Bernard, the most important obligation of a pastor toward his flock. Thousands of souls call upon us to give them the help which will save them from eternal loss. Such a help is the direct effect of the Office when piously recited by the pastor. Prayer is as the soul of sacerdotal life; the pastor owes it to his flock, just as the flock owes him his support.

Third Point.—The most important interests demand the pious recitation of the breviary. If I acquit myself of the obligation well, I shall receive light—*accedite ad eum et illuminamini;* I

preserve myself from sin; I multiply my claims to heavenly rewards. If I fulfil it negligently, I deprive my people and the Church of the graces they had a right to expect from my prayer: I deprive my labors of the principal cause of their efficacy. If negligence in this matter becomes a habit, who will be able to count up the number of sins resulting from it?

MEDITATION XXII.

WHAT DOES THE GOOD PRIEST DO TO ACCOMPLISH WORTHILY THE OBLIGATION OF RECITING THE BREVIARY.

1.—*He Prepares Himself for It.*
2.—*He gives His Whole Attention to It.*

First Point.—Prepare yourself for the recitation of the Holy Office. Every prayer demands a preparation; but particularly the breviary, the public prayer of the Church. Attend to the two following points: remove the obstacles, take the proper means.

I. Remove the obstacles. Here are the principal ones. The breviary is begun with a faint-hearted spirit, on the plea that, as it is recited without relish, no benefit is derived from it. Is it, then, necessary to experience such relish before receiving abundant blessings from God? Are we to look upon emotional graces as the most precious of all? The saints thought more of a slight sacrifice than of the sweetest consolations. "The true manner of serving God," said St. Francis de Sales, "is to follow Him without any support of feeling or of light, except that of faith." God often leads in like manner those whom He calls to the severest labors of the apostolate. Is there a prayer more meritorious than the one which is spent in repelling temptations?

The breviary is considered as an occupation of secondary importance, and the time employed in saying it is regretted. Hence it is that the Office is put off to the end of the day, sometimes to a later hour at night when they feel quite sleepy; or it is recited at times or in places when recollection is impossible.

There is so much else to attend to. But "one thing is necessary": "If you seek, seek." (Is. xx. 12.) Do you forget that the breviary is the Office *par excellence? Nihil tam officium, quam Divinum.* To praise and glorify God is the end of man; with greater reason is it the end of the Christian, the end of the priest.

The obligation is considered a burden, and submitted to out

of sheer necessity. But is it not an honor to represent the Church, to plead its cause, to do upon earth what the angels do in heaven? Has Thy conversation, then, O my God, nothing for me but bitterness and tediousness? Wilt Thou be pleased with compulsory homages? "Not with sadness or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

II. The means to be used are the remote and the proximate preparation. In the first mentioned, we must place the habit of recollection; the exalted idea one has formed of a function so honorable and important; the study of the meaning of the Psalms in order to enter into the sentiments which they express. The proximate preparation consists in finding the proper Office; in withdrawing from creatures, in order to place ourselves in the presence of God. "I leave the world and I go to the Father." (Joan. xvi. 28.) Let us not enter the divine audience thoughtlessly, not without having bethought ourselves of what we are going to do, and having calmed down our imagination. We will then humble ourselves before God at the thought of His greatness, of our sinfulness and nothingness. We will next purify ourselves by an act of contrition, and implore the grace to sanctify this part of our life which is about to be used up in the presence of the Lord, as the candle is consumed before the altar.

These latter preparations you will find in the admirable prayer *Aperi Domine*, if in reciting it slowly you try to become penetrated with the sentiments which it contains. Whom do you offer to it? *Domine.* He is the Lord God who deserves sovereign homage and respect. What do you request of Him? *Aperi os meum.* This you could not do of yourself; for there is question of blessing and praising Him. *Ad benedicendum nomen sanctum tuum.* It is only to a pure heart that so holy an intercourse with the Divinity can be permitted; is yours pure enough? *Munda quoque cor meum.* Were you as pure as an angel you would still need the assistance of the Holy Ghost to enlighten your mind and inflame your heart, in order to qualify you to perform this angelical function properly. *Intellectum illumina, affectum inflamma, etc.* Unite yourself to the intentions of Jesus Christ, and beg of Him to ignite in your heart a spark of that fire of charity which gave so much value and efficacy to His prayer. *Domine, in unione illius divinæ intentionis, etc.*

Second Point.—Give your whole attention to it. The mouth, the mind, the heart should concur in reciting the Divine Office with fervor as the Church commands it. *Studiose ac devote.*

Officium oris. Let us pronounce the words distinctly, without precipitation. To omit syllables, to misstate words would be

robbing from the holocaust. Is he not failing in respect to God whose tongue moves on quicker than his mind, in the recitation of the breviary? The religious, bound to recite the canonical Office, must sing it with full voice. "*Non parcentes vocibus . . . non remissis vocibus.*" (St. Bern. 47 in Cant.) Though we should preserve our strength for the labors of the ministry, we are not on that account permitted to fail in respect to God in prayer; but we should rather endeavor, for that very reason, to purify our interior disposition.

Officium mentis. Attention, *attente.* Listen to the luminous principle of Bourdaloue: When the Church laid on me the obligation of saying the Office, she demanded of me a reasonable worship. Now, when the mind or reason has no part in the prayer, the worship is not reasonable, and the mind can have no part in it when it pays no attention to it. From this principle draw the inference, that when you are voluntarily distracted during the Office, the sin is as great as if you had omitted it. Since I pray to God to be attentive to my prayer, should not I be attentive to it myself? "*Quomodo te audiri a Deo postulas, cum teipsum non audias?*" (St. Cypr.)

We distinguish three sorts of attention. *Ad verba, ad sensum, ad Deum.* The first is in itself the least excellent; but it ordinarily leads on to the second, which is the most perfect. This attention to the sense of the sacred canticles enlightens the soul, and inflames piety through the thoughts and affections which it excites. It enables us to produce many acts of faith, hope, charity, and of all the virtues of which we continually find admirable formulas in the Psalms and prayers of the breviary. You may, however, be sometimes satisfied with the third kind of attention, viz., to occupy the mind in thinking of God, to whom you speak; of the mystery which is celebrated; of some virtue of which you feel the need; or of some particular grace which you desire to obtain for yourself or some other persons. Nothing can be more easy, sometimes nothing more useful, than this third manner of praying without effort, with hardly any labor of the intellect, through a simple aspiration of the heart. Indeed, this method seems to be the only one practicable on occasions of great fatigues, or when unable to control the flights of our imagination.

Officium cordis. Devotion, *attente.* In this homage which I present to God, the heart and the mind must act in concert; otherwise my attention would be a mere speculation, a study. It is in the affections that the merit and virtue of prayer consist. "What use in the sound of words," says St. Augustine, "if the heart is dumb?" The heart of the pious priest is never dumb in the

recitation of those admirable canticles which he pronounces as the expressions of his own sentiments.

What should we do in order to entertain or reanimate fervor in the recitation of the Holy Office? Before beginning, ask yourself as St. Bernard often did, *Ad quid venisti?* What art thou about to do? Collect all the faculties of your soul. *Venite exultemus Domino.* Enkindle your devotion whenever you pronounce the *Deus in adjutorium,* the *Gloria Patri,* or the word *Oremus.* Ascend in spirit to heaven. "Place Jesus to your right, and Mary to your left, and all the saints round about you." (Thomas à Kempis.) It is particularly important frequently to renew our union with Jesus Christ, praying with His voice and heart, since He prays for us as our Pontiff, says St. Augustine, and as He prays within us as our head, whilst our prayers are addressed to Him.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—We should prepare for the recitation of the Holy Office.

I. Remove the obstacles. The recitation of the breviary is begun with a faint-hearted spirit, because of the multitude of distractions. But constancy in repelling temptations is the most meritorious of all prayers. That occupation is considered as one of secondary importance, but in reality the others derive their merit and efficacy from it. It is considered as a burden; yet what honor it is for me, and if I like, how sweet an occupation!

II. Means. Remote preparation—Recollection, study of Psalms. Proximate preparation—Seek the right office; withdraw from creatures.

Second Point.—Apply yourself wholly to recite the Office. Pronounce the words distinctly. Attention, *ad verba, ad sensum, ad Deum.* Say it with devotion. What use is the sound of words if the heart is dumb?

MEDITATION XXIII.

THE THOUGHT OF ETERNITY, A POWERFUL MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION.

1.—*There is an Eternity.*

2.—*What is Eternity?*

3.—*Which shall be my Eternity?*

The greatest part of the meditations contained in this first section, and particularly those which follow immediately, borrow from the thought of eternity their most powerful motives to determine a soul to make the sacrifices that God demands of it. Let us be strongly penetrated with this salutary thought of eternity.

First Point.—There is an eternity. I can not too often animate my faith on this point of doctrine. For the just it is the most consoling of all doctrines; for the sinners the most terrible of all. In vain do the passions rise up in fury, and endeavor to obscure it; if you shut your eyes you do not destroy the brightness of the sun. My reason demonstrates the immortality of my soul; the most evident revelation teaches me the resurrection of my body, future immortality, the eternity of my whole being. *Credo . . . carnis resurrectionem, vitam aeternam.* "These will go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." (Matt. xxv. 46.) I believe, O Lord, on the authority of Thy word, transmitted to me through the infallible authority of Thy Church. I believe that after this present time, where everything is transitory, I shall enter eternity, where nothing passes away. The heavens and the earth, that are the works of Thy hands, shall perish, but Thou, O my God, and I myself, by a decree of Thy sovereign will, shall remain, and our years shall not fail. (Ps. ci.) Thou hast willed that eternity should be attached to my being as it is to Thine. Thou and I shall subsist eternally.

Second Point.—What is eternity? Language can not express what the mind does not comprehend. Eternity, being one of the perfections of God, must be as incomprehensible as God Himself. With regard to us, eternity is a duration without end; nothing can measure it; an unvarying condition, nothing can change it.

1. A duration which can not be measured. Our age, proud of its science, pretends to submit everything to the power of calculation. They have measured the extent of the earth, the depth of the sea, the distances, dimensions, and movements of the various heavenly bodies. . . . Eternity is beyond the power of calculation. No man can succeed in imagining a length of time that will come

near to eternity, for no one can come near the boundary where no boundary exists. Shall we compare eternity to a chain, each of whose innumerable links represents many millions of ages? Eternity is this, and infinitely more than this. Add any number to eternity, you do not augment its duration; take from it any number you choose, you shall not thereby shorten it. In that boundless course of eternity, one ever goes on, and never advances. Some day it will be said of you, "He has begun his eternity"; but it shall never be said that you have passed the third, the fourth, the one hundredth part of your eternity; it shall ever be as long for you as on the day on which you shall have entered it.

Forever, never, are the only words which express the duration of eternity. How long a time will that good priest enjoy the delights of heaven? How long a time will the wicked priest dwell in the terrible dungeon reserved to the greatest sinners? Forever. When will eternity become a little less delightful for the friends of God, or a little less hopeless for His enemies? Never. When will the howlings and tortures of the reprobate cease? When will the pure and ineffable joys, the transports and triumphal chants of the elect come to an end? Never. O Ever, O Never, O Eternity! Oh that we could understand you as those do whom death has separated from us!

II. A situation which nothing can change. The tree falleth and does not rise again. "In what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." (Eccl. xi. 3.) The fall may be foreseen; if it be faulty, it can not be remedied. In what direction does the tree lean? Is it much inclined? Has it been so long? "In what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be." In one hundred, in two hundred years, there shall it be. When this world shall have ended, when a new earth and new heavens shall have been created, there shall it be. After the lapse of as many millions of ages as there are drops of water in the ocean, there it shall be.

Vicissitude is the lot of our present condition; immortality is attached to our future destiny. Here hour follows hour, and the last does not resemble the first; there, there is no variety, everything is permanent. The day does not follow the night, neither does the night come after the day. Nothing there will alter the joy, nothing will assuage sorrow or pain. No change to be feared in heaven, no change to be hoped for in hell. If in that state of fixity they were insensible to pain, the sinners might somewhat console themselves. Alas, such is not the case. They will realize with the keenest vividness what it is to exist in an immutable state of sovereign misery, and in the reunion of those eternal years in one eternal instant, they will bear each moment the weight of the

whole eternity. Grant me, O my God, a little more faith, wisdom, common sense; a little more courage, a little penance before I enter into the inexhaustible, immutable eternity! As soon as I shall have crossed its threshold, what I shall be for one moment, the same shall I remain forever.

Third Point.—What shall be my state in eternity? As in this world each man belongs to the city of God or to that of the devil, so in the next world human kind is divided between two eternities: the eternity of rewards, the eternity of punishments. In the former there are united together all the glories, all the joys, all the delights without the alloy of the slightest contradiction; in the latter there are accumulated together all sorrows, shame, and despair without any alleviation. Eternity of heaven in all that is most ravishing; eternity of hell in all that is most frightful. . . . I am continually advancing toward either of these two goals. Into either of these eternities I must necessarily enter. There is no alternative. If I lose the crown of the good priest, I shall not escape the reprobation of the wicked one. I shall be forever near God, beholding His beauty, sharing in His happiness as His faithful minister; or I shall be forever separated from Him by an immense chaos, subject to the most horrible tortures, the most bitter regrets, to weeping and gnashing of teeth. Forever in the most delightful society, singing the praises of the Lord and the joy of my triumph; or forever amongst the devils and the greatest criminals of the earth, vomiting forth blasphemies and maledictions.

Which of these destinies will be mine? I know it not; but this I know, there is only one step between me and eternity: *sto ad littus æternitatis.* A rush of blood to the head, an attack of heart disease, some accident, etc., and I shall be in eternity. This also I know, that I may miss the eternity of the holy priest, and have to undergo the punishment of the reprobate priest. O my soul! Should not an eventuality of this kind absorb all thy cares, command all thy solicitude, and determine you to make all sacrifices! O Eternity, exclaims St. Augustine, whoever meditates upon thee without reforming his life must either have no faith or no heart. And now, O my God, henceforth my sole occupation will be to wash away by my tears the stains of my former life, and to prepare by good works for the blessedness of the days of eternity! "I thought upon the days of old, and I had in my mind the eternal years." (Ps. lxxvi. 6.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—There is an eternity. Reason demonstrates the immortality of the soul. The most evident revelation teaches me

the resurrection of my body, and the future eternity of my whole being. After the last sentence, "the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting."

Second Point.—What is eternity? A duration without end, nothing can measure it; a situation forever fixed, nothing can change it. *Forever, never.* No other words can better express the duration of eternity. Situation without change. What I shall be, when beginning my eternity, the same shall I remain forever!

Third Point.—What shall be my eternity? There are two eternities: the eternity of rewards for the just, the eternity of punishment for the wicked. Which shall be my eternity? I know not; but this I know, that there is but one step between me and eternity. *O ever! O never!* O heaven! O abyss of hell!

MEDITATION XXIV.

ON WHAT MY ETERNITY DEPENDS.

1.—*On my Life.*
2.—*On my Very Short Life.*
3.—*Perhaps on One Moment of my Life.*

First Point.—My eternity depends on my life. It is written of the sovereign Judge: "He will render to every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27), and of the man who shall be judged it is said: "What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap." (Gal. vi. 8.) Our actions, good or bad, says St. Bernard, are so many seeds for eternity. We cast them down into the earth, they disappear; but we shall find them at death, they shall remain inseparably united to us. A thought which crosses my mind, a word which I pronounce, an action which lasts but a moment, all those flowing in succession into the vast bosom of eternity, become permanent and immutable as eternity itself. In one moment I do that which all ages shall not destroy. I yield to temptation—it is for eternity; I pray, I give alms—it is for eternity. That sin of which the enjoyment passes away as lightning, unless I expiate it by penance, shall for eternity be attached to my soul in order to torture it, as the vulture adheres to the prey which it devours. On the other hand, this act of penance, of religion, of charity will obtain for me eternal joys, if I am not so foolish as to strip myself of my merits by the commission of new iniquities.

I am therefore in reality the master, the arbiter of my eternal destiny, with the grace of almighty God, which gives inspiration,

light, and strength. Here is reason to tremble, here is reason to hope. I have reason to tremble, if I judge of the future by the past; if I recall to mind my imprudences, my weaknesses. This is true, O my God, but since Thou once more vouchsafest to call me to Thee, and to place before me means of reconciliation, it remains in my power to prepare for myself a blessed eternity—all that is requisite is to will it; and it seems to me that I am so determined.

Second Point.—My eternity depends on my very short life. What is time if compared to the eternal years? O Lord, since Thou hast given me days which can be counted, and years which can be measured, my substance is as nothing before Thee. (Ps. xxxviii.) A duration which ends, which ends so very soon, and vanishes away like a dream, is a mere nothing when compared to our endless duration. We are too near the present life to be able to judge rightly of its shortness. Let us look at it from the place where we will see it after some millions of ages passed in either of the two eternities. How will it appear then? It is now what it will then appear to be. Ah, undoubtedly, after passing so long a time either in the dwelling of the reprobate or in that of the elect, we would scarcely have a remembrance of our passage on this earth, were not our eternity itself to remind us that we once enjoyed life, and that during that very short time we decided our lot for eternity.

Did we now ask St. Paul, St. Francis Xavier, St. Alphonsus Liguori, what they think of the sufferings of the duration of their apostolic labors, they would all at once answer with the accent of the deepest conviction, "That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) "Behold with your eyes how I have labored a little, and have found much rest to myself." (Ecclus. li. 35.) And what do the reprobate think of that time which had been granted to them to merit heaven, a time which they spent in preparing for themselves inconsolable regrets, an inextinguishable fire, an eternity of torments? Listen to their laments: "All those things are passed away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on, and as a ship that passeth through the waves. . . . Such things as these the sinners said in hell." (Sap. v. 9, 10, 14.) Ah, those reflections came late. Why had they not made them before? But how well now I understand the truth of the words "time is short." This time so short is very precious indeed, when I meditate upon my forthcoming eternal destiny!

Third Point.—My eternity depends perhaps on one moment of my life. Grace has its times. *Tempus stellæ.* Light shines and disappears. God comes near and retires. He speaks and remains

silent. He is the Master of His gifts, and grants them on such conditions as He likes. Behold, however, the ordinary plan of His providence; graces of predilection are granted for fidelity to common graces; but if we refuse to respond to them we render ourselves unworthy of new blessings. One moment of grace well used may raise us to great sanctity, to an immense happiness! On the other hand, one moment of grace which we neglect may draw us to the bottom of the abyss.

Abraham shall be eternally blessed for his fidelity in obeying the commandment to immolate his own son: "because thou hast done this thing." What would have become of David, St. Peter, Mary Magdalen, had they not seized upon the favorable occasion, the moment of divine grace, which for them was the moment of salvation? Blessed would have been Jerusalem, notwithstanding her past infidelities, had she known the time of her visitation and turned to good use the last day which was given her; it was her day. "In this thy day." (Luc. xix. 42.) But this hardened people resists once more the impressions of grace, the sweet invitations of mercy; it allows the decisive moment to pass away, and hence its blindness and misfortunes. But they are now hidden from thy eyes.... "They shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." (Ib.) An eternal hell may be the consequence of an inspiration which I reject; as also a blessed eternity may be the reward of an act of obedience to the call of grace. *O momentum unde dependet aeternitas!*

O Lord, I promise it to Thee, at what hour soever I shall hear Thy voice, and whatever may be the sacrifice which it will demand, I will no more harden my heart. But what do I say? I have heard, and I still hear that strong voice which resounds in the very depth of my soul. Eternity, eternity! Ah, how many trifling concerns there are which fall and pass away at the thought of eternity! Yet those trifling matters impassion me; they elate me through joy or deject me through sorrow. O my God, on this earth there is for me now one cause of joy only, viz., that which draws me near unto a happy eternity; there is now for me but one subject of sorrow, and that is whatever might lead me to commit sin, and thereby to be separated from Thee forever.

Come, O Jesus, King of good things eternal. Thou hast promised them to us in Thy Gospel; Thou hast merited them for us by Thy death; Thou hast given us a pledge of them at Thy altar. "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood has life everlasting." (Joan. vi. 55.) Since Thou nourishest me with the bread of the elect, Thou willest to associate me to their happiness. Oh, come, take possession of my soul and contract with it an alliance which

henceforth may be unalterable. Come and place me in the ranks of those holy priests of whom the conversation is in heaven, who hardly cast a glance upon that which passes away, and keep always looking at that which shall last forever. *Qui stant super præsentia, et speculantur æterna; qui transitoria sinistro intuentur oculo, et dextro cælestia.* (Imit. iii. 38.) Come, guard my soul and keep it unto life everlasting. *Corpus Domini nostri Jesu Christi, . . . Sanguis Domini nostri Jesu Christi custodiat animam meam in vitam aeternam.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—My eternity depends upon my life. Nothing can be more certain. "Every one will receive according to his works, and will reap that which he shall have sowed." Our actions, good or evil, are so many seeds for eternity. I am therefore the arbiter of my eternity, as I am the master of my works. Here is cause to tremble, when I recall to mind my past imprudences and weakness; here is also cause to hope, since after all it is in my power to make sure my eternal happiness.

Second Point.—My eternity depends upon my life, which is very short. What is time when compared to the years of eternity? A duration which ends, which disappears like a dream, is a mere nothing compared to a duration which has no end. What do the elect, what do the reprobate think about eternity?

Third Point.—Perhaps my eternity depends upon one moment of my life. Grace has its moments. God is master of His gifts and grants them on whatsoever condition He chooses. A moment of grace put to good account may lead me to a great sanctity, to an immense joy in heaven. On the other hand, a moment of grace which I neglect may precipitate me to the bottom of the abyss.

MEDITATION XXV.

FRUITS OF SANCTIFICATION PRODUCED BY THE THOUGHTS OF ETERNITY.

1.—*Wisdom guiding us in our Deliberations.*
2.—*Courage sustaining us in our Trials.*
3.—*Ardor animating us in the Practice of Virtue.*

First Point.—The thought of eternity is a sure light that guides us in our deliberations. Couple the least pain, the slightest sadness with the thought of eternity, and it becomes overpowering. On the contrary, a slight contentment which would last for-

ever would have an almost infinite value. What then must be the assemblage of all the sorrows, the most acute, the most intolerable? What the reunion of all the most inebriating joys, if both one and the other be eternal? If we seriously consider this thought, we must necessarily adopt the maxim of St. Gregory: *Nulla major securitas, ubi periclitatur æternitas.*

Too many precautions can not be taken when there is question of an eternity of sovereign felicity or of sovereign misery.

This has been the guiding maxim of all the saints. Adopting the advice of St. Paul, who exhorts us to "measure ourselves by ourselves" (2 Cor. x. 12), and feeling that they were created for eternity, they found nothing with which they could compare themselves in this world, where everything passes away and is of short duration. By following this rule the wisdom of the young has often proved superior to that of the old. Teresa, yet a mere child, withdraws to a solitary place, and says to herself, "To be eternally happy, or eternally unhappy! Thereon make thy choice." Young Stanislaus gives all to God, refuses all to the world. He is asked the motive of a course apparently so singular, and behold his answer: *Non sum natus præsentibus, sed futuris.* Aloysius Gonzaga frequently asks himself, *Quid hoc ad æternitatem?* In this thought of eternity I find two rules of prudence. According to the first, I adopt the means to the end; following the second, of two evils I choose the lesser, and of two blessings I choose the greater.

I. Having but one object in view, which is to obtain at any cost the eternity of the elect, and to escape that of the reprobate, I look upon everything with this sole object in view: *Quid hoc ad æternitatem?* What means will render success more certain? What are the obstacles which would be most liable to diminish my chances of success? I will prize and seek that alone which will help me to obtain my end; I will reject that alone which would lead me from it. Should I remain amidst the pomps and dangers of the world? Had I better quit them? *Quid hoc ad æternitatem?* Riches or poverty, a life of comfort or penance, honors or contempt? *Quid hoc ad æternitatem?*

II. Comparing duration with duration, the goods and the evils of this life with the goods and evils of eternity, I make my choice, and I select the condition which offers me the greatest amount of goods and the lesser of evils; nothing can be more reasonable. To renounce eternal delights and choose eternal torments for the pleasures of a moment is naught but mental folly, madness. *Heu! quanta insania pro exiguis et brevi tempore duraturis deliciis, æternas amittere delicias, et cruciatus subire sempiternos!* (St. Hier.)

Second Point.—The thought of eternity sustains us, and renders us invincible in our combats. Our enemies bring pleasure and suffering to assail us. It is only to procure ourselves some little satisfaction, or to escape some trifling pain, that we commit sin and endanger our salvation. What will the thought of eternity effect? It will oppose pleasure to pleasure, sorrow to sorrow, duration to duration. *Quidquid æternum non est, nihil est:* this also was a maxim of St. Aloysius Gonzaga. He applied it to the sacrifices which virtue demands, and to the pleasures promised by sin. In presence of a happiness which shall last forever, the satisfaction of a few moments loses for me all its charms, and I am too much in dread of endless torments to apprehend a pain which will last but a moment.

How many saints have been strengthened by this thought, in circumstances wherein they had much to fear from their natural frailty! They said to themselves, *Momentaneum quod delectat, æternum quod cruciat.* I will gratify myself for one moment, and for this one moment of madness I shall weep, I shall be in despair forever. O eternity, O sin of one moment! You restore reason to my mind, and virtue to my disturbed soul!

How was it that the just of the Old and of the New Testaments showed so much constancy in their trials? "Their hope was full of immortality." (Sap. iii. 4.) The martyrs embraced their tormentors, cheerfully offered their limbs to be torn by iron hooks. Whence came that courage? With the particular assistance of Jesus Christ it came from this thought: I do indeed suffer; but my torments will soon be over, and I thereby preserve myself from endless punishments. Should my torments last for weeks, months, a whole lifetime, all this would be but for a moment; and when it is past, I shall enter into joys and delights which shall never cease. *Momentaneum quod cruciat, æternum quod delectat.*

The life of the good priest is one long martyrdom. A servant as well as a pastor, he is answerable to all, to the ignorant as well as to the learned, to sinners as well as to the just; he has to sacrifice, to immolate himself for all, and at all times. If he consider the present time only, he will be apt to complain; but let him think of that weight of eternal glory reserved for him; let him forget what he sees and experiences, in order to consider that alone which he will see and experience in eternity. "While we look not at the things that are seen, but at the things that are not seen; for the things that are seen are temporal, but the things that are not seen are eternal." (2 Cor. iv. 18.) Like St. Paul, he will be "filled with comfort," he will "exceedingly abound with joy in all his tribulations." (Ib. vii. 4.) He will "reckon that the sufferings of this

time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come." (Rom. viii. 18.) Pain is drunk drop by drop, says St. Bernard; but the reward will be poured down upon us as a river of peace, which will inundate us with its water and will never run dry.

Third Point.—The thought of eternity animates us to do good. The good priest grows in virtue and zeal in the same proportion as the thought of eternity impresses itself upon his mind. The avaricious man is less greedy to amass gold than the man of faith to increase the measure of his merits. Being certain of finding in eternity that which he shall have sent there before him, he encourages himself by recalling to mind the following words of the Imitation: *Non diu hic laborabis. . . . Fideliter labora; . . . scribe, lege, canta, geme, tace, ora, sustine viriliter contraria; digna est his omnibus et majoribus præliis vita aeterna. . . . Non est parvum quid, perdere aut lucrari regnum Dei.* (Im., iii. 47.)

He who does not actually labor for a blessed eternity generally labors for an eternity of woe. Were it not ever a question of rendering his salvation more secure, the good priest would not fail to labor zealously, for he knows well that each meritorious action will be for him an increase of glory and joy through endless ages. For this slight act of mortification, of meekness, of patience, he will see God more clearly, he will possess Him more intimately for all eternity. He also knows "that night cometh when no man can work." He says to himself, Now, soul, "let us do good whilst we have time." "He who soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who soweth in blessings shall also reap blessings." (2 Cor. ix. 6.)

Whilst preparing for Mass, dispose yourself to perform that action so holy as a starting-point for a more perfect life. Your fervor will be constant if you will observe the following regulations: 1. Always walk between the two eternities, not losing sight of either one or the other. 2. Let all your actions be pervaded by the thought that their effects will endure through eternity. 3. Be strongly convinced that the sacrifice you make for your sanctification are placed by you in the hands of God, who will reward them a hundred-fold in eternity. 4. At the sound of the bell, at the sight of the dial, call to mind that all succeeding hours and minutes are so many steps toward approaching eternity.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The thought of eternity is a sure light which guides us. What is the assemblage of all the sorrows, the reunion of all the joys, if both one and the other are eternal? Too many precautions can not be taken, says St. Gregory, when there is

question of eternity. Our security is never too great. This has been the maxim of all the saints.

Second Point.—The thought of eternity sustains us, makes us invincible. It opposes pleasure to pleasure, suffering to suffering. In view of a happiness which shall never end, the pleasure of a few moments' duration has no attraction for me, and I dread endless torments too much to be frightened by a momentary tribulation. "Whatever is not eternal is nothing, or should be reckoned as nothing." Such will be my answer when sin will offer its allurements, when virtue will present its austerities.

Third Point.—The thought of eternity a motive of ardor in the practice of virtue. Certain of finding in eternity fruits of my good works, and knowing not when I shall go into it, I therefore say to myself, Forget not, O my soul, that thou laborest for eternity. As a reward for this act of humility, of charity, I shall see God more clearly, I shall possess Him more intimately for all eternity. Night is coming; let us multiply our merits whilst we have time.

MEDITATION XXVI.

THE CELEBRATION OF THE HOLY SACRIFICE, THE MOST EFFICACIOUS OF ALL THE MEANS OF SANCTIFICATION GIVEN TO THE PRIEST.

We are often told to be holy, that we may worthily offer the holy sacrifice. Hearken to this holy counsel, celebrate holy Mass with all the piety of which you are capable, and you will surely and promptly attain the perfection which God demands of you. To-day we shall consider the altar as a school in which Jesus Christ by His examples gives us the most useful lessons; to-morrow we shall meditate upon the wonderful aid which we find in the most holy sacrifice.

Sanctification for the laity consists in these two things, to die and to live; "to strip one's self of the old man and to put on the new man." (Col. iii. 9.) The priest should moreover communicate to souls that divine life which he has found in Jesus Christ. For him sanctification consists in dying, living, giving life, these being three degrees of sacerdotal perfection of which the Son of God, immolated by us, offers to us on the altar the most perfect and attractive model. He then teaches us—

1.—*To Die to Ourselves and to the World.*

2.—*To Lead a Most Holy Life.*

3.—*To Animate our Neighbor by our Zeal.*

First Point.—Jesus Christ on the altar a model of mortification. This virtue costs us more than any other; but see with what love Our Lord teaches it in the celebration of the holy mysteries; the Mass is the living reproduction of the Passion. The body and the blood of Our Lord consecrated separately, and immolated by a mystical death; the vestments adorned with the cross, this same sign which is used in all the ceremonies; the elevation of the Victim by the priest, who thus places Him between heaven and earth as He was placed on Calvary; the patience and silence of the Lamb of God, who is there without any movement or sign of life: everything on the altar represents the sorrowful circumstances of His first immolation on Calvary. Moreover, cruel treatment and outrages have not ended for Our Saviour with His mortal life; does He not experience again in our sanctuaries the hard trials of His Passion? For His heart there is the same sadness as at Gethsemane, seeing the crimes that are committed whilst He offers Himself to repair the glory of His Father. Then, He meets with the same coldness, the same indifference, the same desertion on the part of the very persons whom He has loaded with His greatest favors. He had foreseen all this when, held fast by chains of love, He constituted Himself a prisoner in the Holy Eucharist. The persecutions of the future were as well known, realized, and felt by Him as those of the present time. His ardent charity triumphed over all obstacles, and the two-fold sacrifice was accepted.

Behold Our Redeemer not only devoting Himself to torments and to death, but prolonging, perpetuating His Passion in the midst of us! Will not His example cause us to love mortification, or at least render its practice more acceptable? Shall I then remain without generosity, without energy to overcome myself, when I think of the Passion which everything in the Mass recalls to my mind? What, O Lord, Thou didst make Thyself my victim, and shall I refuse to be Thine? Instituting this august sacrifice, and choosing me to be its minister, Thou didst know how many tribulations Thou wouldst have to undergo, in order to come to one so lowly. Thou didst see to how many sacrilegious outrages Thou wouldst have to submit, and how many Judases Thou wouldst meet on the way during that long course of nineteen hundred years. That frightful perspective did not cause Thy love to relent, and could I be unwilling to suffer something for Thee? Thou hast sacrificed for me Thy joys, Thy honor, Thy liberty, Thy life; shall I hesitate to sacrifice my feelings and susceptibility? For me Thou wouldst be disowned, insulted by a number of Thine own disciples; for me Thou wouldst be spit upon, scourged and crucified, and all this was to last to the end of the world! Should I then complain

if I be forgotten a few days of my existence here below? Should I be dejected on account of a slight offence, a momentary contradiction? Should I continue to be proud, sensual, and exacting? Such a contrast makes me feel indignant with myself. The martyrs, fed by the heavenly bread, were not daunted by dungeons, gibbets, or the funeral pile, and now, too, the priest who loves the Eucharist cares not for sufferings, whatsoever their nature or their cause may be. He dies to himself, according to the admonition he received at his ordination: *Imitamini quod tractatis, quatenus mortis Dominicae mysterium celebrantes, mortificare membra vestra a vitiis et concupiscentiis omnibus procuretis.*

Second Point.—Jesus Christ on the altar a perfect model of sacerdotal life. The life of Our Saviour in the Eucharist is all inspired with divine wisdom. Human wisdom understands nothing of that deep obscurity wherein sovereign Majesty conceals itself, nor of that solitude, nor of that ineffable union of contemplation and of action, for in this mystery Jesus seems to be inactive, and yet He is all action; from His tabernacle He governs the world. To glorify God by His adorations and humiliations, to save men by continually pouring down upon them the blessings of His grace, such is the life of Jesus Christ on our altars. It is a continual exercise of all the virtues, practised with infinite perfection.

What meekness, what patient goodness! He suffers all to approach, to touch, to eat, to insult—He repels none. The lowly and the great, the ignorant and the learned, the sinners and the just, all find ready access to Him—what humility! He removes from around Him whatever might bring Him distinction or glory. He veils His divine splendors and even His very humanity! He does not appear what He really is, or rather He appears not at all. What submission! Being Lord of lords, He surrenders himself, to whom? In what way? For how long a time? Is there a moment when He is not somewhere in the hands of His ministers, who offer Him to the adoration of the people, shut Him in the tabernacle and dispose of Him as they please? What incomprehensible recollection! What ineffable union with God, what sublime prayer! Not one instant has it been interrupted from the institution of the Holy Eucharist, and to that prayer the world is indebted for whatever happiness it enjoys.

Behold the model of the life of a good priest. Whilst teaching us that sublime wisdom which is folly to the world, the example of the Saviour in this mystery communicates to us that pure charity which stops at no difficulty. . . . That example in which strength is united to kindness draws us to and guides us in the way of that

interior life all hidden in God, which is the soul of the apostolic life. In this way Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, after teaching us how to die to ourselves, teaches us how to live after His own life.

Third Point.—Jesus Christ on the altar the model of true zeal. The holy Mass calls to our mind what Jesus Christ did and what he still does every day and every moment for the salvation of souls. It is the living memorial of all the mysteries of His life and principally of His death. *O memoriale mortis Domini!* Now, in that life and in that death all tended toward one object, and that was to glorify God by saving souls. Was it not for souls that He descended upon earth? Was it not the thought of their happiness that sustained Him in the agony in the garden, in the sufferings of the pretorium and of Calvary? In the Eucharist He still continues to be the great Lover of souls. For their salvation it is that He comes down every day upon thousands of altars. He continues unceasingly to dispel illusions, to rectify their wrong inclinations, to sanctify them. In the tabernacles He waits for sinners, He invites them to come and unload in His bosom the heavy weight of their remorse.

O Priest, what an example He gives you! But, foreseeing that this silent example would not sufficiently influence your zeal, He unites to it a pressing exhortation, at the very moment of His mystical immolation; at that moment it is that He commands you to remember His Passion. *Haec quotiescumque feceritis, in mei memoriam facietis.* When in that solemn moment He reminds you of what He suffered for souls, does He not at the same time strongly recommend to you the care of their salvation? Is it possible for you to say Mass and not recall the words of Our Lord to St. Peter: "Lovest thou Me? Lovest thou Me more than these? Then feed My sheep." Attend to the care of souls, suffer not thy brethren to perish, as thou knowest that I died for their salvation.

Jesus Christ by His example on the altar not only excites but regulates and directs our zeal. What purity in His motives! Is he self-seeking? Is there any mixture of self-interest, are there any personal views in all that He does for the salvation of souls? How cautious, how full of condescension in order to withdraw them from sin and bind them to virtue. Does He dishearten sinners, nay, even the greatest of sinners? If He does not yet admit them to His table, He at least tolerates them in His presence.

Did I hitherto imitate, or rather did I study this perfect model? Oh, now I confess it! I never even thought of regarding Thee under that aspect in the Holy Eucharist. Make me henceforth more attentive, make me especially more docile to the lessons which Thou givest me every day in the celebration of the holy mysteries.

Grant me a participation in that mortification, in that divine life, in that ardent charity, of which Thou givest me such touching examples on the altar.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ on the altar a model of mortification. How well Our Saviour teaches us this virtue in the celebration of the holy mysteries! Mass is the living representation of the Passion; and when Our Lord constituted Himself a prisoner in the Holy Eucharist the persecutions of the future were as well known to Him as those of the present. His charity triumphs over all obstacles.... Could I, O Lord, be unwilling to suffer anything and still claim to be Thy follower and representative? *Imitamini quod tractatis.*

Second Point.—Jesus Christ on the altar a model of a holy, sacerdotal life. The life of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist is a continual exercise of all the virtues practised with an infinite perfection. What patience, meekness, what humility, what submission, what recollection, what union with God! This example of Our Lord attracts and guides us in the ways of that interior life which is the soul of an apostolic life.

Third Point.—Jesus Christ on the altar a model of pure zeal. Mass is the memorial of all the mysteries of His life, but principally of His death. In that life and death of Our Lord all was intended for the honor of God through the salvation of souls. Can we celebrate Mass without hearing Our Saviour address us as He did St. Peter: "If you love Me, feed My lambs," save souls! Have I hitherto studied, have I imitated this beautiful model?

MEDITATION XXVII.

THE PRIEST SANCTIFIED AT THE ALTAR.

1.—*By the Sacrament which he Receives.*
2.—*By the Sacrifice which he Offers.*

First Point.—At the altar I receive a sacrament. And what sacrament? It is the most holy, the most powerful of all the sacraments: a sacrament which contains in substance and reality the Author of all sanctity. O my God! Is it possible to communicate every day, and not become a great saint? Communion is Jesus Christ giving me His whole substance. He, as it were, puts at my disposal His infinite perfections, His graces, His merits, all that He is, and all that He has. O unfathomable depth of the

mystery of His love! When I have eaten the bread which came down from heaven, Jesus is mine; He is all mine, His divinity, His humanity!

His wisdom, power, mercy . . . all His adorable perfections are mine, for He comes and offers to use them all for my happiness. Did we know how to listen to Him when he comes down in our souls, under the sacred species, we would hear Him say to us as He did to the blind man of Jericho: "What wilt thou that I do to thee?" Speak, what dost thou desire? When I came down upon earth in My Incarnation I came for all mankind; but now I give myself to thee—what is thy request? What wilt thou that I do to thee? How can I remain infirm when God offers to cure me of all my evils? How can I remain indigent when He places in my hands the treasures of His incomprehensible charity?

All His *graces* are mine. In the other sacraments and through the other blessings that I receive from Him, I drink from the streams of divine grace. Here I possess the very fountain-head. For I possess the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. Is not this the sacred fountain which supplies the Church at all times, in all places, with that water which springs up into life everlasting? Is not this the inexhaustible source of all the graces which have ever nourished and will ever nourish and ever form the elect of heaven?

All His *merits* are mine, for it is particularly in this mystery that there is formed between Jesus Christ and the soul that receives Him that community of goods and of life compared by Our Lord Himself to that life which unites so intimately His Father and Himself. "I and the Father are one . . . I live by the Father; so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." From My Father I receive life; I live by Him; so, if you eat My flesh, from Me you shall receive life; it will flow from My heart into yours. Then you shall have a right, to some extent, to say to Me what I say to my Father: "All things which are thine are mine." *Omnia tua mea sunt.* Oh, how consoling is this thought! I, a careless laborer, I could not but tremble as I felt the end of the day coming, when to every man will be rendered according to His works. What good did I do? And how did I do it? I have lost so much time! Where are my claims to the rewards of heaven? What right have I to the crown of the good priest? Oh, my soul, be comforted, banish thy fears. Thy claims to an eternal reward are grounded upon the infinite merits of Christ, which belong to me when I have received Him in holy communion.

All His *virtues* are mine. At that happy moment when Jesus Christ is in His minister, as His Father is in Him, and when He communicates to me the divine glory which His Father gave Him,

I must not fear to appear in the presence of the most holy God, for He sees me, so to speak, all resplendent with the virtues of His Son. I can now say to Him with confidence: "O Lord, I am not now unworthy that Thou shouldst look down upon me. O God, look on the face of Thy Christ; do I not now possess all that is pleasing to Thine eyes? Righteousness is pleasing to Thee. Behold my soul all resplendent with the righteousness of Christ! I no longer complain of not loving Thee as I ought, for at this moment I love Thee through the very heart of Thy Son. Henceforth my adoration, my gratitude, my penances are quite worthy of Thy greatness and goodness, for I offer to Thee the homages, the thanksgivings, the satisfactions of Jesus Christ.

O Priest, be not troubled beyond measure at the thoughts of thy frailty! Behold God has supplied thee with a firm support that nothing can move or destroy. He presents it to you on the altar. "I have established him with corn and wine." (Gen. xxvii. 37.) Oh, how many means of sanctification I find in my communion of every day! Whom have I to blame but myself if I am not filled with the fire of the most ardent charity? *Non est defectus in cibo, sed in sumente.* Oh, did I but allow full sway to the love of Jesus Christ in my heart after the blessed moment of communion.

Second Point.—At the altar I offer a sacrifice. The same as that of the cross, as the Council of Trent has defined it. Its value is infinite, its efficacy all powerful, so that it propitiates God in His anger, and obtains all blessings from His goodness, notwithstanding my personal unworthiness.

I know that one Mass would be sufficient to sanctify and save thousands of worlds. But there is one point which I did not consider often enough heretofore, and that is the immense share that I have as a sacrificer in the fruits of the sacrifice.

When I ascend the altar to plead the cause of the universe, representing heaven, earth, and purgatory, it seems that I should be forbidden to think of myself and my own personal interests; not so, however: I am commanded to think of myself in the first place, and the sacrifice which is offered for the whole world is offered in an especial manner for its ministers. The first drop of blood of the victim is to be applied to the healing of the infirmities of my soul; it is first for my *innumerable sins, offences, and negligences* that I present to God's justice the superabundant merits of His Son immolated on the altar. After imploring the mercy of God for myself, I will think of asking pardon for all the faithful, living and dead: *Sed et pro omnibus fidelibus Christianis, vivis atque defunctis; ut mihi et illis proficiat ad salutem, in vitam æternam.* Salvation and life everlasting *for me.* Behold the prime object of the tears, of

the wounds, of the insults, of the death of Jesus Christ; then in the second place, all those who belong to Him by faith will share in the purity of His immolation: *Ut mihi et illis proficiat.* Such is the order prescribed by the Church.

This same order I find in all the parts of the sacrifice. At the consecration of the chalice Jesus says through my lips, "Take and drink, this is My blood, *qui pro vobis et pro multis effundetur.*" What means this distinction? *Pro vobis et pro multis?* Behold two classes of persons for whom the blood of the Redeemer shall be shed, on the cross and on the altar. Is it not as if He had said, "For you, my apostles, you chiefs of my people, for you my priests, who will continue this ministry to the end of time, for you in the first place I immolate myself. *Pro vobis.* In the next place I offer myself for all those who through your works of zeal will become members of my body, *et pro multis.*" Likewise at the end of Mass: *praesta ut sacrificium . . . tibi sit acceptabile, mihique et omnibus . . . sit, te miserante, propitiabile.* Everywhere I see my own interests set apart, and in the first and most prominent place: *mihi et omnibus.* Oh, what an incentive to confidence, to gratitude and ardent love!

With the daily oblation of the august sacrifice is there anything wanting to me, O my God, in order to attain to that ever-increasing sanctity which Thou requirest of Thy ministers? With the daily oblation of the Mass I should feel less concerned about the great obligations imposed on the priest, and more thankful for the abundant graces granted in order to fulfil them.

O Jesus, although Thou art never sparing of Thy gifts, Thou never dispensest them so prodigally as at the precious moment when I with Thee offer to God the holy sacrifice! Then it is that Thou pourest into my bosom "that good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over." (Luc. vi. 38.) Why did I not appreciate such a talent at its true value? But Thou hast enlightened me, O my dear Saviour. Henceforth the most important of my devotions will be the celebration of Mass with all possible piety. It is but right that an action so highly exalted above all others should be the aim of all my prayers, of my thoughts, all my devotions and penances. I pray Thee, through the holy Virgin, through the apostles and all the holy priests of heaven, enable me to understand what I do at the altar; grant me grace to say Mass well. With this grace I shall possess all others, and if I were deprived of all the gifts which make a man useful to his fellow beings, my priesthood would continue to be the treasure of the earth, the salvation of my brethren, and for myself it would constitute a sure claim to the crown promised the faithful minister.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—At the altar I receive a sacrament. The most holy of all sacraments. After communion, Jesus is within me with all His *perfections*, all His *graces*, all His *merits*, all His *virtues*. Oh, how many means of sanctification in the daily reception of this sacrament!

Second Point.—At the altar I offer a sacrifice. Its value is infinite, its efficacy is all powerful in propitiating the anger of God, in obtaining blessings. As a sacrificer my participation in the fruits of the sacrifice is immeasurable. At the altar I am all powerful. "Thou hadst the Mass." These words pronounced by the Judge will suffice at the last day to condemn the reprobate priest.

SECTION SECOND.

SIN KNOWN THROUGH DIVINE CHASTISEMENTS. SINS OF THE PRIEST. THE EFFECT OF SIN. SOME ENORMOUS SINS: SCANDAL, THE SACRILEGIOUS MASS. SOURCES OF SIN: PASSIONS, LOSS OF TIME. VENIAL SIN: TEPIDITY, ABUSE OF DIVINE GRACES.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

SIN PUNISHED.

1.—*In the Rebellious Angels.*
2.—*In Adam and his Posterity.*
3.—*In some Reprobate less Guilty than I am.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the abyss of hell; the countless multitude of wicked angels who fell into it, and the children of Adam who are each moment cast into it.

Second Prelude.—Beg of God to fill you with sentiments of confusion and repentance at the sight of those victims of sin.

First Point.—The sin of the angels. Let us begin by adoring God in His infinite sanctity: *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus.* He will be approached by saints only. "I will be sanctified in them that approached me." (Lev. x. 3.) "The priests, also, that come to the Lord, let them be sanctified lest He strike them." (Ex. xix. 22.) Let us, then, go up in spirit to heaven, where the angels dwelt before their fall, and ask, What were they? What did they become by committing sin?

Their names help us to understand the excellence of their nature:

Angeli, archangeli, throni, potestates, virtutes, dominationes, etc. One seems to see reflected in them all the perfections of the Godhead.

But whilst our eyes are still dazzled with that immense splendor, ah, what a frightful catastrophe meets our gaze! "I saw Satan like lightning falling down from heaven." (Luc. x. 18.) Where does he fall? "Into eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt. xxv. 41.) Who has inflicted this terrible punishment? A being infinitely wise, ever calm, without a shadow of passion; God who would cease to be God were He to cease to be just, were He to punish a fault beyond what in reality it deserves. He is an infinitely good Father, who loves to reward, and who punishes always with regret. Who are the victims of that dreadful vengeance? They are noble creatures whom God loves as the chief works of His hands; who would have procured to Him so much glory through all eternity! . . . *Si in angelis reperisti pravitatem, nec tamen pepercisti, quid fiet de me?* (Im., iii. 14.) Finally, what has He to reproach the angels with? How many sins did they commit? O frightful justice! Where else, except on Calvary, shall we find such an example of the punishment which sin deserves? "How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom. xi. 33.)

The priest, too, is an angel; such is his name. "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, . . . because he is the angel of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.) He performs the functions of the angel, placed in the sanctuary as the angel of God in heaven, in order to give praise to the Lord. Woe to him if sin finds its way into the sanctuary as it did into heaven in the days of Lucifer. One first sin, a sin of a moment, a purely spiritual sin, can change a priest into a demon.

The enormity of the crime of the angels was in proportion to the light and blessings they had received. Ah, Lord! is it not under similar circumstances that I have sinned? What do I say?

The angel had not heard of a deluge of water, of a deluge of fire; he had heard nothing of that flood of divine blood poured out to atone for sin. I had, therefore, the knowledge of experience which the angel had not; his very misfortune was a lesson to me.

As to blessings, did I not receive as many of them as he had? Had he the powers which I enjoy? Was he a priest? I will therefore say with St. Bonaventure, *Lucifero horribiliorem me invenio. Ille, nulla praecedente vindicta, peccavit superbiens; ego, visa ejus poena, peccavi contemnens. Ille semel in innocentia est institutus: ego multoties in ea sum restitutus. Ille se erexit contra eum qui se fecit: ego contra eum qui me refecit. . . . Et si ambo contra Deum, ille*

tamen contra non requirentem se: ego vero contra morientem pro me. (De. 4, Ment. Exerc.) O my God, I am not worthy of Thy compassion! How much less should I deserve it did I not turn to account that mercy that Thou now offerest to me, but which was refused to the angel!

Second Point.—The sin of Adam. Pride caused the third part of the angels to fall from heaven; the disobedience of the first man threw the earth into confusion. Adam reigned over all visible creatures and over himself. What great peace reigned in his soul! Countless innocent pleasures offered themselves to his senses, which were in turn submissive to reason. Delightful was the place wherein he dwelt. God spoke to him as a friend speaks to a friend, and that happiness was but a foretaste of a far superior felicity promised to his fidelity; and that blessed destiny he was to have transmitted to his posterity. Alas! he left them no legacy but tears. He has hardly committed sin when the anger of God bursts forth against him, and at the same time overwhelms the whole human race. O Adam! "Where art thou?" *Ubi es?* What has become of that righteousness wherewith thou wert clad as with the purple robe of a king? What has become of the admirable splendor of that intelligence, of those noble aspirations of thy heart? What means that sorrow which begins to devour thy soul? Behold, thou art banished into a valley of tears. How durst thou disobey thy Lord and thy God?

Would that he alone were unhappy! But he knows what all mankind shall have to suffer for their guilty parent. He hears his countless descendants, from generation to generation, lamenting under the weight of his own personal iniquity, reproaching him for their misfortune, and calling on him for that innocence and immortality, and all those other admirable gifts which he had received, as much for them as for himself.

Nine hundred years of sufferings, of bitter regrets, and then death; behold the wages that Adam receives for his sin. Nor does this penance suffice. All his posterity shall have to suffer, to weep and to die with him. And is this all? No. To this expiation infinity is wanting. There must be added to it the sufferings, the tears, the death of a God become a willing victim for man! Now at least, O Lord, after the death of Thy Son, the offence against Thy Majesty has been entirely atoned for; now there can be no more sufferings on the face of the earth. Now, assuredly, eternal sufferings in hell are not to be apprehended. Alas! such is not the case; even after the penance and the death of the Son of God, suffering shall be the portion of man, and victims without number shall continue to fall into hell. O mysteries of justice! O sub-

ject of terror! *Discam timere te, Domine, si non didicerim amare te.* (St. Aug.)

Third Point.—Sin of some reprobate less guilty than I am. Whilst I am here at the source of graces, if I descend in thought to the place of torments, I shall find there souls who committed but one mortal sin. Very probably I shall find there some priest, who, after honoring his priesthood through the practice of great virtues, had the misfortune to become lukewarm, to lose the friendship of God, and to fall into hell. He had led a good life; he had acquired a right to the possession of one of the most beautiful thrones of heaven, and behold, he has been stripped of his righteousness, cast into the flames, and is forever condemned to undergo all the horrors of a frightful damnation! And *one mortal sin* is the cause of all this; it is this one sin that God punishes in a man whom He loved so far as to die for him, so far as to grant him a superabundant participation in the merits of His Passion and death. My God, my God, it seems to me that the scales are at last falling from my eyes; I cease to wonder when I am told that the mere shadow of sin caused Thy saints to tremble. I understand the conduct of those who, after committing but one sin, spent the rest of their life in weeping for it. How, then, durst I defy the Majesty of so holy and terrible a God by committing sin?

St. Ignatius here counsels the practice of three colloquies, which it will be well to repeat in the following meditations:

The first is addressed to Mary, overcome with sorrow at the foot of the cross. We implore her to intercede for us with her dying Son, to obtain for us the knowledge and detestation of our sins, the reformation of ourselves such as God has a right to expect; finally, grace to detach ourselves from the world and to renounce its wicked vanities, which have been the principal source of our transgressions. This colloquy is ended by the recitation of one *Ave Maria.*

The second is addressed to Jesus Christ on the cross. We beg of Him to offer for us to His Father His divine sufferings, and to obtain for us those three self-same graces which He deserved for us by His death. At the end the *Anima Christi* is recited.

The third colloquy we address to God the Father, to whom we present the great Victim of Calvary. Through the bloody wounds of His adorable Son we beg of Him that three-fold grace, and we end by saying the Our Father.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Sin of the angels. What were they before their sin? What a blessed state! What happened through their sin? "I saw Satan like lightning falling down from heaven." Whither

did he fall? Who punished him? God, infinitely just, infinitely good. They had committed but one sin! One sin made a demon of an angel, and can make a reprobate of a good priest.

Second Point.—Sin of Adam. Blessed as long as he remains just. As soon as he has sinned, divine anger bursts forth, first against him, and then and there against all mankind. Nine hundred years of sufferings, of bitter regrets, and then death; . . . and all his posterity shall have to suffer, to weep, to die with him. It will be necessary that a God-Man come, and by His death complete that immense expiation!

Third Point.—Sin of some reprobate less guilty than I am. How many souls there are in hell who committed but one mortal sin! There are those priests whom God had tenderly loved, who had acquired a right to a most beautiful throne in heaven. God now hates sin as much as when His justice wreaked such terrible vengeance.

MEDITATION XXIX.

SIN IN GENERAL CONSIDERED AS IT REGARDS GOD.

"Be not without fear about sin forgiven." (Ecclus. v. 5.) The Spirit of God hereby invites us to detest anew the sins which we have already detested, and especially those committed before we enter the sanctuary. Christians in the world, after a light penance which sometimes is more apparent than real, imagine they have discharged their obligation toward the justice of God. They deceive themselves in trying to believe that sin is rather a forgetfulness of God than an offence, that God is not concerned about that offence, His supreme greatness placing Him far beyond the reach of our outrages. To these two errors we will oppose the two following truths:

1.—*Sin is the Most Injurious Outrage against God.*

2.—*Sin is an Outrage which God Feels Most Keenly.*

First Prelude.—Present yourself before God as a criminal loaded with chains, led forth from prison and brought before the tribunal of his judge.

Second Prelude.—Grant me grace to know, O my God, all the shamefulness and criminality of sin, that I may lament and blush for having committed it so often: *Ingemisco tanquam reus, culpa rubet vultus meus.*

First Point.—Sin is the most injurious outrage against God. Let us listen to the words of Our Lord: "Thou hast broken My yoke, thou hast burst My bonds, and thou saidst, I will not

serve." (Jer. ii. 20.) Behold sin with its most loathsome features: revolt, contempt, ingratitude.

I. Revolt against the most sacred authority. God intimates His orders, makes His will known to us. The same God who gave His law on the mountain of Sinai, He proclaims it within my conscience: "Do this, I command it; this thou must not do, I forbid it. As thy Creator and thy Master I require this proof of thy obedience. As thy friend, thy Father and thy Saviour, I require this token of thy love. This is the price of thy eternal felicity. Choose between My hatred and My affection." By his conduct the sinner answers: "I will not serve Thee, I will listen to the voice of my passions alone." Who will ever understand the audacity, the injustice, the wickedness of such rebellion?

What audacity! I rise up against the great God, before whom the universe is but a speck of dust, the nations a drop of water, and all mankind mere nothingness. "He said, and all was created." "He looketh upon the earth, and maketh it tremble. He toucheth the mountains, and they smoke." (Ps. ciii. 32.) "The mountains melted like wax at the presence of the Lord." (Ib. xcvi. 5.) "Thou art terrible, and who shall resist Thee?" (Ib. lxxv. 8.) Who? A vile speck of dust, a withered blade of grass, a leaf carried by the wind, a frail being, whose life is scarcely formed, when it vanisheth away like a vapor. And who is it that commits sin? Sometimes a timid person, who does not even tremble at the sight of God holding in His hand the thunderbolts of His anger; nor at the thought of hell, which will soon open to engulf him. . . . O man, how durst thou contend with the Almighty?

What injustice! If it be a crime for a man to rise up against his king or his father, how shall we qualify the action of him who rebels against God? Have we forgotten that all power comes from Him; that He is, in truth, our only master? We are so sensitive concerning our rights; are those of almighty God less to be respected than ours?

What wickedness! Every sin, says St. Bernard, attacks some attribute of God; anger His meekness, lying His unchanging truth, hatred His charity, sensual pleasure His purity. And still more, says the same Father, every sin deals Him the death-blow as far as its power goes. Ask the sinner what it is that disturbs him in his sin? Ah, there exists a God who sees it and will avenge it. Ask him what sacrilegious desire arises in his heart? I wish there were no God, to behold, to condemn, to punish my transgressions. . . . O sinner, thine iniquity will injure none but thee; although thou hast conceived the horrible desire to destroy almighty God if this were in thy power. *Quantum in ipso est, Deum perimit.*

II. Contempt of the very highest, of the only adorable Majesty. "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, O earth." I had children whom I loved tenderly; whom I had nourished with extreme care; I had exalted them to the highest dignity, giving them a participation in my own nature;—what filial affection should have been theirs, what zeal to honor Me? Know ye what they have done? "They have despised Me." (Is. i. 2.)

To despise . . . God! To treat as a vile thing Him who is the source of all excellence and perfection! This is what I did each time that, divided between conscience and passion, I resisted the voice of God and followed the bent of my passion. It was a question for me either to lose or to preserve the friendship of God, the possession of God! Shall I say it, O Lord? I did make the comparison, I did reckon what Thou art worth, I did weigh Thee in the balance with the value of a moment's pleasure. . . . *Cui assimilastis me et adaequastis?* (Is. xlvi. 5.) To the honor of serving Thee I preferred crime! What insult! Had any one else, or the world, or my health required of me the sacrifice which Thou didst demand, I should at once have made it. I committed sin because by sinning I was offending, I was losing no one but Thee! Thou saidst, "Give Me thy heart," and obey My law; that heart of thine belongs to Me, I wish to make it happy. Whither wilt thou go if thou wilt yield to temptation? Can he be thy friend who excites thee to revolt? Think of the abyss that he is drawing thee to. All Thy efforts, O Lord, were in vain; the devil prevailed. To glory, to heaven, to Thine own possession, I preferred degradation with hell and Satan. Can there be any greater contempt?

III. Ingratitude toward the most generous benefactor. Jesus said to the Jews: "Many good works I have showed you, . . . for which of those works do you stone Me? (Joan. x. 32.) God may address this language to every sinner: "All the favors that you have enjoyed, it was from Me that you received them. Intelligence, free will, sentiment, liberty, life, all these I have given thee. I gave thee My own Son, and in Him did I not give thee every blessing? Yet thou dost outrage Me. What did I do to thee, what is thy grievance? Dost thou insult Me because I have blessed thee? I have created thee, and for thee did I create all other things; is it on this account that thou dost sacrifice Me to creatures? Dost thou treat Me as an enemy because I have freed thee from a cruel enemy? Dost thou punish Me for having loved thee to excess?" O my soul, what wilt thou answer?

Second Point.—Sin is an outrage that God feels most keenly. The whole teaching of the Gospel has for its foundation the hatred which God entertains for sin. The Christian religion, with its

dogmas, its precepts, its graces, its threats and promises, seems to have been established for no other aim than to show us with what keenness God feels the outrages offered Him by sin. What is the object of the sacraments, of the preaching of the word of God? It is to purify us, to preserve us from sin. How severely God punishes it wherever He finds it! In the angels, in Adam and his posterity, in the person of His only Son, who had only the appearance of sin. But in order to have an adequate idea of the indignation that sin kindles in the heart of God you must keep in mind two mysteries that are intimately connected, though they seem to be widely separated. We mean Calvary and hell. Bring these two extremes together, sound those two abysses of mercy and of justice: Jesus dying for the sinner, and the sinner in hell.

One mortal sin is punished by God in the everlasting fire of hell. Who is this God that thus punishes? A crucified God dying for the expiation of sin, a Father with more fondness for sinners than Abraham had for Isaac, but notwithstanding His fondness, notwithstanding the tears that He has shed and the blood that He has spilled for the sinner, if he happens to die in sin, He rejects, He disowns him for eternity. O sinner, say then no longer: "Sin does not irritate God; what does He lose thereby?" What does He lose by your sin? As far as you are concerned He loses the merit of His sufferings, His humiliations, His death. . . . What does He lose? He loses thee, unfortunate man. Hast thou not cost Him dearly enough to make Him keenly feel that loss? Thou, the work of His hands, the price of His blood, . . . whom He condemns for endless ages to drink to the dregs the cup of His wrath. What then is sin that it begets so much hatred in a heart where once there was so much love?

Excite yourself to contrition by recalling to mind the principal sins of your life, and by casting a glance at your crucifix. Remain at the feet of the Saviour as a perjured friend at the feet of a friend whom he has cruelly betrayed; as a parricidal son at the feet of his father. . . . Your sins, however enormous, will be forgotten if with sincere repentance you ask pardon for them in the name of the wounds of Jesus Christ.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Sin is an outrage against God, a revolt against the most sacred authority. Who is he who commands or forbids? Who is he who refuses to obey, and what are the characters of that revolt? Insulting audacity! A man dares to oppose himself as an equal to the almighty God! Crying injustice! Disregarded

rights, sacrilegious wickedness. The sinner would do away with God if it were in his power.

Contempt of the highest of all majesties. The friendship of God, the possession of God: behold the treasure I was bound to preserve. And yet I established a comparison between God and the pleasure of a moment. To honor, to heaven, to the possession of Thee, I preferred degradation, Satan, and hell!

Ingratitude toward the most generous of all benefactors. God gave me all, and I used all against Him. What more could He have done in order to possess my heart and all its affections?

Second Point.—God is most keenly sensitive to outrages offered Him by sin. How terribly He punishes sin wherever He finds it, in the angels, in Adam and his posterity, in the person of His own Son who had only the appearance of sin. Think of Calvary, think of hell, God dying for the sinner, and the sinner condemned to hell.

MEDITATION XXX.

MORTAL SIN IN THE PRIEST. ITS CHARACTERISTICS.

1.—*Its Malice more Inexcusable.*
2.—*Its Ingratitude more Detestable.*
3.—*Its Perfidy more Dark.*

Same preludes as in the preceding meditation.

First Point.—Mortal sin in the priest has a more inexcusable malice. One has never a right to offend God. He is so good, He has so many titles to our obedience and to our love! Two things, however, without justifying sinners, offer some claims to divine indulgence, namely, their ignorance and their weakness. They have in general less light and less strength than we have.

Apart from the fact that their instruction is often incomplete, the turmoil of pleasures and business form about them, as it were, a cloud which dims the brightness of eternal truths. Is it easy in this world of darkness to know, O my God, the wonders of Thy greatness, the severity of Thy justice, the charms of Thy infinite perfections? They have less strength. They draw more rarely from these sources of grace—prayer and the sacraments. The numberless cares of their state in life fatigue and weaken their souls, but in these respects what is there wanting to the priest?

Before and since the time of his priestly consecration he has heard many exhortations, read many books, had an opportunity to make serious reflections. Does he need light, he who is the torch destined

to enlighten the world? "You are the light of the world." Does he ignore the law, he whose duty it is to preach and interpret it? He therefore can not be considered as one of those sinners for whom Our Lord prayed at His death, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." O cruel tormentor of thy Saviour, thou knowest well what thou doest when thou crucifiest Him, and when thou sinnest it is not through ignorance.

Is he in want of strength, he to whom so many helps are offered to sustain his weakness? The life of a priest is but a series of the most precious graces. The very vestments that he wears bring religious thoughts to his mind. Prayer is his almost continual exercise. Then the Mass! . . . Has he not there the very source of all graces? Can he call himself weak who can incorporate with himself the Most High? He has light, he has strength to protect him; he simply commits sin because he wishes to commit it.

Second Point.—In the sin of the priest ingratitude is more detestable. If the goodness of God toward Christians be exceedingly great, it must be said that God is prodigal of His goodness with regard to the priest.

"I was as yet in the womb of my mother, when He selected me to be the privileged object of His favors. He had chosen me, even then, to reveal in me and through me the mercies of His Son, giving to me the noble task of making Him known to nations and people." That grace of my vocation was the prelude of innumerable other graces. What cares and attentions were lavished on me during my clerical education; and then came my elevation to a dignity higher than that of kings, and the reception of powers far superior to those of angels. And since my ordination did Jesus Christ ever once refuse to grant me all blessings in giving Himself to me?

What had he not to expect in return for so much love? Oh, how true to say that the deepest wounds of the heart of Jesus are those received at the hands of His priests! "If My enemy had reviled Me, I would verily have borne with it." (Ps. liv. 13.) From an enemy you may expect every bad treatment. But when thou insulted me, *Tu vero!* thou whom I loaded with My favors, thou My minister, the confident of My troubles, thou My other self, *Homo unanimis!* Who now will spare Me if My priests persecute Me? Who shall be with Me if My friends are against Me? And if they outrage Me, who will uphold My glory?

Third Point.—Sin in the priest shows a darker perfidy. He is a perfidious man, who makes no account of the engagements he has freely contracted, who betrays his faith, and labors to annihilate the very interests he has sworn to defend; but perfidy is of a darker type when it hides itself under the veil of friendship. Such,

alas! is the horrible nature, the almost inseparable character of the sin of the priest, especially when it has become habitual!

No one had forced you to come and declare before the altar that the Lord would be the portion of your inheritance; that you preferred the honor of serving Him to all the advantages that the world can offer. It was with full freedom that you took the vow of perpetual continency. How does the unfaithful priest conduct himself with regard to the sacred engagements which he so frequently renewed? He despises them, as he also despises the great God of heaven, to whom he vowed fidelity. *Ipsi autem spreverunt me.*

Oh, my Lord, why did I consecrate myself entirely to Thee, and then afterward profane my whole being by offending Thee. "What is the meaning that My beloved hath wrought much wickedness in My house?" (Jer. xi. 15.) What is the motive of a course so much opposed to justice and to reason? *Quid est?* What do you complain of? Is it of My excessive goodness? What, *My beloved?* In My own house, in My sanctuary, wearing My livery. *In My house* thou hast dared to outrage Me, and that so often: "much wickedness." *Quid est quod dilectus meus, in domo mea fecit scelera multa?*

My God, my God, I confess my crimes, but do Thou also glorify Thy mercy. Hast Thou not said that "If your sins be as scarlet they shall be made as white as snow" (Is. i. 18) as soon as the sinner would return to Thee through repentance? Remember Thy word; it is the only hope of Thy servant. Dost Thou wish it to be said, There was a sinner who had put his trust in God, and he was confounded? Behold now in Thy presence a sinner whose heart is humble and contrite; accept his sorrow. I do not ask of Thee to mitigate the bitterness of his anguish; I rather ask that Thou increase it. But at least speak to him words of peace and of pardon. Come Thyself in the Sacrament of Thy love, and say to my soul that Thou art her salvation; and "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, and shall be delighted in his salvation." (Ps. xxxiv. 9.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Malice more inexcusable in the sin of the priest. Because the priest has more light and greater assistance to protect him against temptation, he has fewer excuses. More than any one else he sins because he wishes to sin.

Second Point.—His ingratitude is more detestable. He had received more; his gratitude should have been greater. How true that the deepest wounds of the heart of Jesus are those received at the hands of His friends! *Si inimicus meus maledixisset mihi.*

Third Point.—It was quite freely that I had made to God the sacrifice of my liberty, that I had taken upon myself the sacred obligations of the priesthood. My promises to God have been solemn and public, but I have despised them; I have despised my God! O my God, I confess my crimes; exalt Thy mercy, and forgive a sinner who repents!

MEDITATION XXXI.

MORTAL SIN IN THE PRIEST. ITS EFFECTS WITH REGARD TO HIMSELF.

1.—*What He Loses by Committing Sin.*
2.—*Into What an Abyss He Casts Himself.*

We must say to the sinner, but particularly to the sinful priest, what God said to Cain after his crime, "What hast thou done?" O Priest, whence didst thou fall? Into what abyss didst thou throw thyself.

First Point.—By committing sin what didst thou lose? The friendship of God. Oh, didst thou understand its value? Courtiers have died of sorrow at having lost the favor of their masters, who after all were mere mortals like themselves; and how shall the priest reconcile himself to the loss of the friendship of his God? How sweet, how noble, were the ties that bound you to Him!

The beauty of your soul. The more resplendent was its departed beauty, the more hideous is its present deformity. Lucifer is now the most horrid of demons, because he was the most beautiful of angels. In the priest the excellence of sanctifying grace is unquestionably proportionate to his eminent dignity, the sanctity of his character and the sublimity of his functions. Alas, "that bright crown is fallen from your brow. Is this the city of perfect beauty? How is the gold become dim, the finest color is changed."

The life of your soul. You appear to be living, but you are dead. *Animam tuam, miser, perdidisti; ipse ambulans funus tuum portare caepisti; et non acriter plangis! non jugiter ingemiscis!* (St. Cypr.)

The merits that constituted the wealth of your soul. How great in this respect are the treasures of merits acquired by the priest, though he had lived but a few days in fervor. If habitual grace supernaturalizes our least actions, and makes of them so many titles to the rewards of heaven, how precious must have been your provisions for eternity, acquired by the noble and saintly deeds

with which perhaps your life has been replete! Unfortunate being, why has your life been prolonged; if you had died just before your fall, where would you be now? If you should die at this moment, where would be your eternal dwelling?

You have lost even the power to merit. Do what you will; if you are not in the grace of God nothing will be of any avail for the life to come. *Nihil mihi prodest!* Though I should cause my talents to be admired by the world; though I should "speak with the tongues of angels. . . . If I have not charity I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." I am still less, I am nothing. *Nihil sum.* My works are dead, because I myself am dead. The tree is still standing, but it produces no fruit; its sapless branches are dead.

Second Point.—Into what a frightful abyss do you cast yourself by committing sin? "By whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is the slave." (2 Pet. ii. 19.) "Whosoever committeth sin, is the servant of sin." (Joan. viii. 34.) It was the duty of that priest to crush the power of Satan, and behold! he is now himself in the toils of the tempter. From the throne he has fallen into the dungeon. The depth of his degradation is equal to the sublimity of his former greatness. The higher the building the more disastrous are the effects of its fall. *Grandis dignitas sacerdotum, grandis ruina si peccant.* (St. Jer.) "What is higher than the heavens?" asks St. Peter Chrysologue. He in some manner falls from heaven who sins in the heavenly state of the priesthood. *De coelo cadit qui in coelestibus delinquit.* O Priest, you were the equal of angels! Whom do you resemble now? You had God for a Father, a friend, and now the devil lords it over you.

How dreadful is the story of the fate of Valerian, reduced to captivity and made the plaything and victim of the ferocious Sapor. At a beck of the victor, Valerian falls on his knees and bows down, and the shoulders of a Roman emperor become the footstool of the barbarian whenever he mounts his chariot. More degraded yet is the sinful priest who has wrought his own shame and misfortune: he has allowed himself to be loaded with the chains of slavery, he has sold his liberty, and at what a price? Behold him a slave of Satan, him who was raised to the priesthood to overthrow the empire of Satan! His new master tells him, Go, and he goes; Do this, and he does it. If he commands an infamous action, a sacrilege, a long series of profanations, . . . alas! he will be obeyed. Whilst dragging his chain the unfortunate slave may shed bitter tears of self-reproach, but he drags it still. No rest is allowed him by his conscience, which at the same time stands up against him as a witness, judge, and torturer. As witness it accuses him, as judge

it condemns him, as torturer it torments him; and because he commits sin after sin, he also passes from torture to torture. Behold him in the sacred tribunal, in the pulpit, at the altar! What gnawing remorse in his heart, if he minds what he says, what he does, what he is! If he thinks not of this, his state is still more lamentable. *O te miserum, sic haec sentis; miseriorem, si non sentis!* (St. Aug.) He has reached the bottom of the abyss, where even the voice of remorse is silent, he is wrapped in the sleep of obduracy; alas! if this sleep continues to the moment of death, what shall be his awaking? (*In endless meditations of this kind, which fill the soul with terror, you may, according to the second method of prayer of St. Ignatius, recall to your mind some of the verses of the Penitential Psalms. We give an example.*)

O Jesus, Priest of priests, Pastor of pastors, have mercy on me. *Miserere mei, Deus.* Not as a priest, but as a sinner, do I present myself to-day before Thee, or rather I come to Thy sacred presence as a priest and as a sinner. Were I a priest but not a sinner I should be entitled to enjoy Thy most intimate friendship; were I simply a sinner and not a priest I might have some claim on Thy indulgence. Therefore, O Lord, I do not to-day merely implore Thy mercy, I invoke Thy great, Thy infinite mercy. *Secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.* And if one act of Thy mercy suffices not to blot out my countless iniquities, I make bold to ask for the multitude of Thy innumerable mercies. *Et secundum multitudinem miserationum tuarum, dele iniquitatem meam.* My soul was so beautiful in the days of its sacerdotal fervor! But to-day, O thrice-holy God, in what state dost Thou see it? The stains of that poor soul offend the purity of Thy eyes. O Lord, purify me, purify me more and more, blot out every vestige of my sin. *Amplius lava me ab iniquitate mea.* I am unworthy to appear in Thy presence, but whither shall I go if Thou reject me? In the name of Thy compassionate heart cast me not away from Thy face, withdraw not from me Thy Holy Spirit; He it is who inspires me with the desire to return to Thee, and the hope of obtaining pardon. *Ne projicias me a facie tua, et spiritum sanctum tuum ne auferas a me.* How sad were the days I have spent since I strayed far far from Thee, O my Jesus! Give me back the wholesome joy of innocence, and, strengthening me by Thy grace, do not ever permit the devil to triumph over my weakness! *Redde mihi laetitiam salutaris tui, et spiritu principali confirma me.* If in expiation of my crimes Thou shouldst require of me the sacrifice of my life, I feel that I would offer it cheerfully. *Quoniam si voluisses sacrificium, dedissem utique.* But no; it is not my blood but my tears that Thou requirest. *Holocaustis non delectaberis;* not, how-

ever, the tears of my eyes dost Thou seek, but the tears of my heart. More pleasing to Thee is the sincere sorrow of the penitent than the sight of his flesh bruised and torn by voluntary mortifications: *Sacrificium Deo spiritus contribulatus; cor contritum et humiliatum, Deus, non despicies.* O my God, I will not be forever ungrateful. My zeal in Thy service will be an evidence of my gratitude. I will preach, I will exhort, above all will I extol Thy mercy. I will inspire the greatest sinners with confidence by showing them the path Thou hast opened to repentance; I will speak to them of Thy tender compassion and clemency, vanquished by the sweetness of Thy mercy, and the wicked themselves will come and cast themselves into Thy arm: *Docebo iniquos vias tuas, et impii ad te convertentur.* And because sin has defiled the dwelling Thou hadst consecrated for Thyself in my soul, rebuild Thy temple, O Lord, and make it worthy of Thee. *Benigne fac, Domine, in bona voluntate tua Sion, ut aedificentur muri Jerusalem.* Then I will immolate the Lamb that blots away the sins of the world; I will offer to Thee the great sacrifice which appeases Thy anger and disarms Thy wrath. *Tunc acceptabis sacrificium justitiae, oblationes et holocausta; tunc imponent super altare tuum vitulos.* Thou wilt, O Lord, accept my penance united to that of Thy Son. Thou wilt bless my apostolate; and with the sinners whom I have won to Thy love I will glorify, I will praise Thee in endless ages.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What did you lose by committing sin? I. The friendship of the Lord. What loss can equal this? II. The beauty of your soul. How hideous and deformed it is now! Lucifer was the most beautiful of all angels; by one sin he became the most horrid of demons. III. The riches of your soul; all your merits, all your titles to the rewards of heaven. IV. You have even lost the power of acquiring merit. The tree is still standing, but it brings forth no fruit; it has lost the sap of life. V. You have lost the life of your soul. As the body separated from the soul is dead, so your soul separated from God is dead.

Second Point.—Into what abyss have you cast yourself by committing sin? You are a slave of the devil, an enemy of God. Your tyrant the devil says to you, Go, and you go; Do this, and you do it. Your conscience accuses you, condemns you, tortures your soul. By sin you are an enemy of God! You have provoked the anger of the Almighty. Do you not live in continual dread of His judgments? If you do not tremble, how deplorable indeed is your state! O my God, have mercy on me. *Miserere mei Deus.*

MEDITATION XXXII.

MORTAL SIN IN THE PRIEST. ITS EFFECTS WITH REGARD TO GOD AND HIS NEIGHBOR.

1.—*What Good can he Do?*
2.—*What Harm does he not Do?*

When a priest permits sin to enter, and especially to establish itself through habit in his soul, he renders himself incapable of fulfilling the sublime ends of his priesthood, and he becomes in the worst sense a worker of iniquities.

First Point.—What good can he do?

I. With regard to God. Can he defend His interests when he is constantly thwarting them? Can he defend His glory, he who ceases not to outrage Him? Will he be the man of God who has made himself the slave of the devil? He has been consecrated to sing the praises of the Lord; it is one of his holiest occupations; but how can he perform that office? Does the praise of the Most High become the lips of the sinner? "The dead shall not praise Thee, O Lord." (Ps. cxiii. 17.) "The living, the living, he shall give praise to Thee." (Is. xxxviii. 19.) "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner."

II. With regard to his neighbor. Will he be full of zeal and compassion for souls when he himself has to be admonished in regard to his own eternal interests? *Miserere animae tuae placens Deo.* Will he be frightened at the danger of the souls of others, when he trembles not at his own state, which is a thousand times more alarming? We can not love our neighbor when we hate ourselves; and the divine oracle has formally declared that "he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul." (Ps. x. 6.) When one is cruel to himself, he can not be good to others.

Zeal is to charity what heat is to fire: without heat there can be no fire; if charity is extinct, zeal is gone. How can he exhort others to the perfection of virtue, when he himself does not practise it even in the most ordinary degree? Will he lead others to detest sin when he himself loves it? Can the sinful priest attempt to preach the word of God without hearing the dreadful voice, "Why dost thou announce My justices?" (Ps. xlix. 16.) Hence his negligence in the accomplishment of his duty; he forgets that he slays those whom he does not nourish: *Non pavisti, occidisti!* His other functions are no better fulfilled, or if in their discharge he seems animated with ardor, as this ardor is simply the result

of natural activity, what good do the faithful derive therefrom? It is not nature that sanctifies. Oh, what a loss for a flock when its pastor is not the friend of God! The sinful priest is powerless for good.

Second Point.—What harm does he not do, even though he give no scandal! If the light goes out in the house of God, everything there will be in darkness. If the head droops and dies, the whole body will be struck with languor and death. An army which has no guards, but sleeping sentinels, is liable to be surprised by the enemy. The good priest, like Moses of old, shelters his people with the shield of prayer. He obtains pardon for sinners by offering for them his own atonements, united to those of the Victim who saved the world; but if the mediator between God and the sinner be himself a sinner! Nay, if the very act of the sacrifice which he offers be accompanied by a frightful crime! . . . Will not this sacrilegious mediation be visited with terrible retributions from heaven? Moreover, let us not forget that we are bound by a community of interests, all priests form one body, of which all the members are so mutually dependent that by swerving from the path of duty a single member may compromise the entire body. The whole of Israel is punished for the sin of Achan. God Himself declares it. "Neither can Israel stand before his enemies, but he shall flee from them; because he is defiled with the anathema. I will be no more with you, till you destroy him who is guilty of this wickedness." (Jos. vii. 12.) Thus Achan had kept for himself some of the spoils of Jericho which had been consigned to anathema. This was a crime; only one had committed it, and the whole people were defiled. *Israel . . . pollutus est anathemate.* The whole people will be punished therefore. The entire clergy is in some way responsible for the transgressions of one of its members.

Thus far we have proceeded on the supposition that the errors of the sinful priest were known only to God. But what if scandal has been given! . . . And who is the sinful priest who is not a scandal-giver? All men scrutinize the conduct of him who in virtue of his office is the censor of every vice. But we need not sound this abyss; we know too well that if a good priest is a treasure for the world, the sinful priest is a universal scourge.

The clergy, O my God, is Thy holy army. Why are not all its battles crowned with victory? Why must zealous priests bewail the loss of so many souls enslaved by the prince of darkness? What is the cause of the limited success of their labors? Is there, perchance, in our ranks some unfortunate Achan? Hast Thou resolved not to remain with us, O adorable Saviour, because in our midst Thou hast detected the *anathema? Non ero ultra vobiscum,*

donec conteratis eum qui hujus sceleris reus est. Do Thou rather Thyself remove from Thy sanctuary and from our hearts whatsoever displeases the purity of Thy eyes. Since the sin of a priest is so great a misfortune for Thy Church, I unite the sacrifice which I am about to offer to all those that will be celebrated to-day to ask for the conversion of all sinful priests. O Jesus, it is for myself I pray to Thee: increase in me, and in all who have inherited Thy priesthood, the love of innocence and the hatred of sin, and do Thou ever abide with us.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What good can he do? With regard to God it is his office to sing His praise. Can the dead praise the Lord? *Non mortui laudabunt te.* Will he be zealous to promote His glory? With regard to his neighbor: Does he who hates himself love his neighbor? *Qui non ardet non incendit.*

Second Point.—What harm does he not do? Though there should be no scandal, if the light goes out in the house of God all will be darkness therein. A good priest shelters his people by his prayer. What sort of a mediation will be that of a priest who has turned against him the anger of God! All priests have a community of interest. . . . All Israel was punished for the sin of Achan.

MEDITATION XXXIII.

THE SCANDAL GIVEN BY THE PRIEST. AN ENORMOUS SIN IN ITSELF.

If I am bound to hate every sin in general, I must detest in an especial manner those sins which stand in more revolting opposition to my holy mission. The end of the priesthood is to glorify God, to save souls, to console the Church; is there anything more opposed to it than scandal! He who gives scandal is in the Gospel named the "enemy." *Inimicus homo.* (Matt. xiii. 28.) The scandalous priest is indeed the perfidious and cruel enemy of all that he was mostly bound to love.

1.—*The Scandalous Priest is the Great Enemy of God.*

2.—*The Great Enemy of Souls.*

3.—*The Great Enemy of the Church.*

First Prelude.—Listen with attention to the words of Jesus Christ: "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones . . . it were

better for him that a millstone should be hung about his neck and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matt. xviii. 6.)

Second Prelude.—Give me grace, O Lord, to understand the misfortune and crime of scandal in the priest, and that I may so watch over myself that I may never say or do or omit anything that might scandalize others.

First Point.—The scandalous priest is the great enemy of God. He outrages and, as it were, persecutes the Holy Trinity with horrifying iniquity.

God the Father had chosen him to cause His name to be known and honored; to publish His law and obtain its observance; to bring back stray souls to obedience and firmly fix inconstant souls in His love, thus preparing subjects for His heavenly kingdom by establishing His sway in their hearts; for this end it was that in the early days of the priest God had poured down upon him His choicest benedictions, and the priest had accepted this noble mission, had solemnly promised to consecrate to it his whole existence. Now, what does he when he gives scandal? He fights against the very cause which he had promised to defend. Far from bringing back to the Lord rebellious subjects, he corrupts His faithful servants; instead of leading men to respect His name, he causes them to blaspheme it; instead of making Him reign over willing subjects, he banishes Him out of their hearts; instead of preparing citizens for His heavenly kingdom, it is for hell that he recruits victims among the souls of men.

God the Son, the Redeemer of souls, depended upon him to apply to them the merits of His sufferings and death. For this end He had conferred upon him most admirable powers, had placed within his hands the treasures of His mercy. . . . Alas! not only does he permit those souls, so dearly purchased, to perish, but under the very eyes of their Saviour, he strikes, he kills, he precipitates them into eternal damnation, he renders useless for them the work of the Redemption. God the Holy Ghost had chosen him for His agent and messenger. He had chosen him to fight against sin, to purify souls and make them His temples wherein He would abide with the Father and the Son. "We will come to him and will make our abode with him." (Joan. xiv. 23.) But the scandalous priest thwarts these merciful designs, instead of co-operating with them; he extends and strengthens the empire of sin, instead of destroying it; he defiles souls, instead of purifying them; and he closes against God and opens to the devil the door of those hearts of which he was the guardian; . . . and is not this waging against the adorable Trinity a most audacious, cruel and perfidious war? *Nullum puto*

majus praejudicium, quam a malis sacerdotibus tolerat Deus; quando eos quos ad aliorum correctionem posuit, dare de se exempla pravitatis cernit; quando ipsi peccamus, qui compescere peccata debuimus. (St. Greg.)

Second Point.—The scandalous priest is the great enemy of souls. When almighty God chose us as His ministers He intended that we should co-operate with Him in the salvation of souls. To teach our brethren the way of salvation; to direct and sustain them; to employ in their sanctification all the means placed in our hands. Behold the indispensable obligation laid upon us. How does the scandalous priest fulfil it? We have no access to the souls of men save through the confidence with which we inspire them; but what confidence can he inspire who preaches one moral doctrine and practises another? Owing to the bad examples of their pastor, sinners will think themselves justified in persevering in their sins, and perhaps weak souls will not apprehend going astray as long as they follow the guide whom God has given them. And then who can tell where this work of moral subversion will end!

Bad example may be compared to a torrent which defies all barriers; but if this torrent comes rolling down from high mountains, its course will be still more impetuous and its ravages more dreadful and wide-spread; the elevation of our dignity is the measure of the evils caused by our scandals. The salt of the earth has become a germ of corruption for those whom it should have preserved in innocence; the light of the world, destined to lead men in the ways of virtue, has misled them into the by-paths of vice. *Considerate quid de gregibus agatur, quando pastores lupi fiunt.* (St. Greg.)

Third Point.—The scandalous priest is the great enemy of the Church. A single fall in the sanctuary may have incalculable consequences. The world, which is indulgent to itself, is inexorable whenever the priest is concerned. It will overlook its own crime, but it will let no imperfection pass in the priest. His slightest faults will be published everywhere, from parish to parish, from diocese to diocese. The scandals of the priest will obtain, as it were, a lamentable immortality. Thus, in a hundred years, perhaps to the end of the world, sins and perversions will be the consequence of a sin committed by a scandalous priest. The reproach of his sin will fall upon the entire body of the clergy. Because they are employed in the sacred functions, they will be taxed with the same vices; and men will go so far as to reject the most sacred truths, for the sole reason that they contradict the behavior of him who announces them. Behold how the honor of the priesthood is tarnished, the zeal of good priests paralyzed, piety destroyed, the

sacraments forsaken or profaned, faith destroyed in whole countries, and thousands of souls lost through the scandals given by a priest or a pastor.

Meanwhile the Church, like another Rachel, weeps over the death of her children. She gives vent to her bitter sorrow through the mouth of her Doctors: *Ecce in pace amaritudo mea amarissima.* (St. Bern.) But he who causes her tears to flow is a man whom she had honored with her confidence, who ought to have been her support and consoler. . . . Great God, how severe will be Thy justice when Thou shalt avenge those tears of Thy Church, that murder of souls by the scandalous priest, and that sacrilegious war which he wages against Thyself! *Vae homini illi.* If Thou punishest terribly the scandals given to one of Thy children, what will be the punishment Thou reservest for him who will have scandalized vast multitudes and whole nations! Recall to mind everything in your conduct that may have disedified your neighbor, and apply yourself to repair the evil as far as you can. If your conscience reproaches you with nothing serious at this time, renew your sorrow for past sin, and at Mass pray fervently to Jesus Christ for the conversion of scandalous priests, and thus lament with the great St. Bernard: *Amici tui, Deus, et proximi tui adversum te appropinquaverunt et steterunt. . . . Heu! Heu! Domine Deus, quia ipsi sunt in persecutione tua primi, qui videntur in Ecclesia, tua primatum diligere, gerere principatum! Arcem Sion occupaverunt . . . et universam deinceps . . . tradunt incendio civitatem. Misera eorum conversatio plebis tuae miserabilis subversio est.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The scandalous priest is the great enemy of God. God the Father had chosen him to defend His cause, to establish His reign over the hearts of men, to prepare for His kingdom the souls of the elect; but the scandalous priest battles against Him, banishes Him from the hearts of men, and leads souls into damnation. God the Son depended upon him to help Him to save men, and he kills their souls. God the Holy Ghost had chosen him to be His agent, and he overthrows His merciful designs, in place of cooperating with them.

Second Point.—The scandalous priest is the great enemy of souls. We have no access to them in order to sanctify them except through the confidence which they repose in us; but now what confidence can a priest inspire them with, who preaches one doctrine of morality and practises another? The elevation of our dignity is the measure of the evils produced by our scandals.

Third Point.—The scandalous priest is the great enemy of the Church. Being a spouse and a mother, the Church is wounded by every scandal which occurs in the two objects dearest to her heart, Jesus Christ, her Spouse, and the faithful, her dear children. A single fall in the sanctuary may have incalculable consequences to the Church, and he who causes her tears to flow is the very man whose duty it was to console her.

MEDITATION XXXIV.

THE SCANDAL GIVEN BY THE PRIEST. ITS DIFFERENT KINDS.

1.—*Intentional Scandal.*
2.—*Scandal given through Tepidity and Negligence.*
3.—*Scandal through Levity and Imprudence.*

First Point.—Intentional scandal. We may apply to the priest what St. Francis de Sales said of religious: *Bonis nihil melius, malis nihil pejus.* The minister of the sanctuary who so far forgets his duty as to spread around him an odor of death, fully justifies the maxim: *Corruptio optimi pessima.* When we speak of intentional scandal, we do not, however, suppose that any one would destroy souls for the sole pleasure of destroying them. Such a scandal, which is in reality diabolical, would be possible in a priest only when he has reached the last degree of obduracy. Without, however, going so far, he knows that certain expressions, certain actions, are calculated to wound the conscience of his neighbor; he foresees the fatal consequences that will follow certain transgressions of his, and yet he does not desist; he commits the sin. Such an unfortunate priest blinds himself in order to sin more freely. He goes so far as to use the authority and ascendancy he possesses in order to undermine virtue of which he was constituted the guardian and support.

O Priest, O Pastor, what a dreadful judgment awaits you! What! dost thou lay a snare for the innocent, thou who art their official protector? . . . And thou stretchest thy abominable nets on the very mountain of Thabor, on that spot sanctified by so many venerable mysteries. The most terrible punishment which God can inflict upon a diocese, a province, a kingdom, is to send them such scandalous priests. Behold what He says by one of His prophets: How shall I strike you anew? *Super quo percutiam vos ultra?* Out of the treasure of My vengeance I will take unfaithful priests; I will

raise in the midst of you ministers whose depravity will be scandalous. "My people hath been a lost flock; their shepherds have caused them to go astray." (Jer. l. 6.)

Second Point. — Scandal through tepidity and negligence. It does not inspire so much horror as the former; but its consequences are perhaps equally deplorable. Alas, how common is this scandal! "There is hardly any middle way for the priest. If he does not edify, he gives scandal; if he does not give life, he brings death; if his life is not an example for others, it becomes a snare; if his entire conduct does not indicate piety, he will encourage, authorize and multiply vice." (Massillon.) The life of the priest ought to be the censure, not of public disorders merely, but also of those false virtues which the world wishes to substitute for those of the Gospel. His aversion to all that is worldly, his modesty, his holiness, should continually remind seculars that true Christians should lead a life crucified and hidden with Jesus Christ in God.

We know what the sentiments of the world are when there is question of sacerdotal sanctity. It would have the priest be an angel, exempt from every fault, adorned with every virtue; it will be satisfied with nothing less. The ideas of the world in this matter are exaggerated, and we have a right to correct them, but we should not make light of them. St. Paul gives us the precept and the example: "Destroy not the work of God for meat. All things indeed are clean; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence." (Rom. xiv. 20.) "If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh, lest I should scandalize my brother." (1 Cor. viii. 13.)

Take into account those two principles: first, that the world expects of us great perfection; secondly, that our private and our public life are spent under the eyes of all the world, which scrutinizes it with the greatest severity, and you will readily understand that the life of a tepid priest is hardly anything but a permanent scandal. In his relations with the men of the world, he scandalizes by the opposition of his sensual immortified life to the doctrine of the Gospel, which teaches nothing but abnegation, charity, imitation of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

He gives scandal through the sacred functions which he performs badly, if he performs them at all. Does he neglect to instruct? If so, he is a cruel father, the murderer of his children whom he neglects to nourish. Does he go late to the confessional? He exhausts the patience of his penitents, and suffers the moment of grace to pass away; a moment for some of them which perhaps will never return. Unfortunate pastor! That member of your flock would have been saved, had you turned to good account the happy disposition of his soul! You shall never see it back at the tribunal

of mercy, but it shall stand a subject of terror to you at the great tribunal of justice.

How numerous are the scandals of the tepid priest in the very exercise of his functions! In the pulpit he exhorts to the practice of humility, but everything in his words and actions bespeaks his own vanity and self-love.

In the sacred tribunal he shows impatience whilst rebuking a penitent who accuses himself of impatience. He is seen going up to the altar without preparation, by persons who a moment before have been the witnesses of his transgressions; what sort of heart is he going to offer Jesus Christ for His tabernacle? He celebrates with precipitation, without recollection, seems not impressed in the least with the grandeur of the action. What a scandal when, after the celebration of Mass, he goes out of the sanctuary as another Judas out of the cenacle, disdaining to give an audience to the Master of the universe who has come to visit him; and then carries the adorable Captive into the midst of the world, forgetting Him in his heart, as one forgets a dead man in his grave.

Is there not a dangerous scandal in so many communions which he receives without correcting himself of a single fault, without acquiring a single virtue? Does he not hereby give rise in the minds of indifferent Catholics to doubts concerning the real presence? Will they be easily convinced that the Sacred Host is Jesus Christ in person, the sanctifier of all the saints, when it does not operate in the soul of the priest with any greater effect than upon the sacred vessels and the altar-stone, which ever remain hard and cold? Will they believe that the sun produces no light, fire no heat, sanctity no holiness? Ah! what an obstacle to the piety and the very faith of a people is the sight of a lukewarm priest celebrating the holy mysteries!

Third Point.—Scandal through levity and imprudence. Want of prudence and circumspection is never blameless in a man who has received charge of such important interests and who is bound by so many laws to lead a most serious recollected life. Want of reflection will not be taken as an excuse from one who, more than any one else, is bound to study attentively his words and his actions as well as the circumstances in which they are spoken and done. It suffices not for him to be godly; he must appear so, and at all times, and in everything. An imprudent question, an indiscreet word, an improper jest, an inconsiderate action have a thousand times been a prolific source of scandal. How many ecclesiastics in their relations with the world, whilst traveling, in the very privacy of their own houses, and by want of caution in the presence of children, have given rise to suspicions,

injurious to the honor of the clergy, and have become an occasion of ruin to souls!

O Lord, like David of old, I too must weep over the sins of others, sins which are nevertheless imputable to me, for they are the result of my scandals. Forgive them, O Lord, as well as my own. One only means is left to placate Thy anger, and that is to be with Thee and through Thee an ardent and indefatigable saviour of souls. Am I not fortunate to be now able to do as much good as I have wrought evil in the past? I acknowledge the debt, O my God, and I will acquit it. Zeal is the atonement of scandal. Deign to accept my sorrow, bless my resolutions. I have but one desire, and that is to repair, so far as I am able, the injury I have done to the Church, to my brethren, but more particularly to Thy glory.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Intentional scandal. Those who are guilty of it know that certain expressions, actions, or omissions are of such nature as to give scandal, and yet they desist not. . . . . They abuse the authority and ascendancy attached to their holy state. O Priest! how dreadful will be thy judgment!

Second Point.—Scandal through tepidity and negligence. It does not excite so much horror as intentional scandal. Its consequences are perhaps equally fatal. Alas, how common it is! . . . The world expects us to live like angels. It watches all our words and actions in order to criticize. . . . Relations with the men of the world. Functions either neglected or badly performed. Oh! how many occasions of giving scandal for a priest, for a pastor of souls!

Third Point.—Scandal through levity and imprudence. The excuse of irreflection will not be accepted from the priest, for he, more than any one else, is bound to consider attentively his words and actions with all their attending circumstances. It suffices not for him to be holy, to be such at all times and in everything—he must give evidence of his sanctity.

MEDITATION XXXV.

THE SACRILEGIOUS MASS.

1.—*Multitude and Enormity of the Crimes which it Includes.*

2.—*Frightful Circumstances which Accompany its Celebration.*

First Point.—Multitude and enormity of the crimes included in the sacrilegious Mass. The priest who dares to celebrate the holy mysteries in the state of mortal sin, *sciens et volens*, according

to St. Liguori, commits not one, but four sacrileges, perfectly distinct in their kinds. 1. Being the enemy of God, he consecrates the body and blood of Jesus Christ. 2. Being defiled and in a state of spiritual death, he receives a sacrament of the living, and the holiest of all the sacraments. 3. He administers it in the state of sin. 4. He gives it to one unworthy, whereas, as the guardian of sacred things, it was his duty to refuse it. *Indigne conficit, indigne sumit, indigne ministrat, ministrat indigno.* He therefore violates four different obligations imposed on him *sub gravi* by the virtue of religion.

The language of the Fathers and interpreters in speaking of this matter is terribly energetic. Each of those sacrileges, they say, is a sort of violence offered to Jesus Christ by the guilty priest, who thus abuses His patience, and the power He gave him over His divine Person. Like Judas, he pretends to love his Master whilst in the very act of betraying Him. "Friend, whereto art thou come?" (Matt. xxvi. 50.) *Dicit Amice, improperans simulationem.* (Orig.) What horrifying hypocrisy! Whilst appearing to adore the Saviour, he gives Him the death-blow, as far as it lies in his power. *Qui indigne abutuntur communione mysterii, quantum in ipsis est, interimunt quem adorant.* (St. Chrys.) His crime is greater than that of the Jews. They crucified Jesus Christ when He was on earth and subject to death; the sacrilegious priest attacks Him in His state of immortality, in the midst of the angelic choirs, in the kingdom of His glory.

The most irreligious man would tremble at the thought of touching the Blessed Sacrament with unclean hands. Ah, how much more keenly does Our Saviour feel the outrage offered Him by the sacrilegious priest! What filth is there that can displease Him as much as sin? He who after a shameful fall approaches the altar, there to pronounce the sacred words and perform functions which demand angelical purity, spits in the sacred face of the Saviour, pollutes His body, tramples it under foot, pours His blood into a filthy sewer. . . . *Quantum flagitium in spurcissimam pectoris tui cloacam sacratum Christi sanguinem profundere!* (St. Th. of Villanov.)

St. Cyril of Alexandria, explaining the words "After the morsel Satan entered into him," says, "What manner of man is this who has just received into his heart both Satan and Jesus Christ? Satan to obey him, and Jesus Christ to put him to death; Satan whom he exalts above Jesus, and Jesus whom he presents to Satan as a victim which he immolates to his honor!"

Let us conclude that to celebrate Mass in the state of mortal sin is the greatest of all crimes. *Nemo deterius peccat, quam sacerdos*

qui indigne sacrificat. (St. Th.) How many tears are shed by the pious priest when he meditates upon these sad truths! How many acts of reparation he offers to Jesus Christ, in order to compensate as far as he can by his love and veneration, for all the insults He receives at the hands of His unworthy ministers!

Second Point.—Frightful circumstances which attend the sacrilegious celebration of Mass. Who is the guilty person? A priest, a man to whom the Saviour had confided the guardianship of His body, the care of His honor, in the mysteries of His love. If he had a thousand lives he ought to be ready to sacrifice them all in order to prevent a single profanation; he ought at least to bewail those which he can not prevent. What is the object of this profanation? Not the name, the image, or the law of Jesus Christ; no, it is His very Person; it is the sacred body which suffered so much for our Redemption. A great crime it is to despise the edict of a monarch, but to lay violent hands upon Him, to attempt to take His life, is parricide.

In what place, at what time, during what action is this crime committed? In the sanctuary, on the altar, in the most sacred spot of the universe, where the charity of Jesus Christ shows itself in its most tender and generous form, at the very moment when He immolates Himself for us, beseeching His Father to load us with His blessings; in the performance of the very act which is in itself the most effective in procuring the glory of God and the happiness of the world!

How many contradictions in this terrible profanation? An impious priest, a sacrilegious sacrifice, sovereign goodness associated with sovereign perversity, the supreme honor of God united to supreme dishonor of His Majesty. Finally, it might almost be said, the devil himself consecrates the body of the Son of God! "One of you is a devil." (Joan. vi. 71.) Ah, how much we would sympathize with Our Saviour Jesus Christ in His affliction did we but reflect a moment upon this spectacle of horror in the sight of heaven, of terror to the earth, of triumph to hell! "The abomination of desolation standing in the holy place." (Matt. xxiv. 15.)

Good Priest! behold the unworthy sacrificer leaving the vestry to go to the altar. See what he is about to do, hearken to what he is about to say, and forget not what he is. Behold him vested with the white robe, the image of the purity required of him. See on his arm "the maniple of tears and sorrow." From his neck is suspended the stole, which is a pledge of immortality! Is it only through the prevarication of the first parent that he lost the right to carry it? How keenly he should feel the degradation of his bondage when he

looks at that emblem of his authority in the house of God! The chasuble, the symbol of perfect righteousness, covers his whole person, as it were, to render him like unto Jesus Christ, "Holy, innocent, without stain, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. vii. 26.)

He is at the altar; he stands in presence of his Judge. *Introibo ad altare Dei.* . . .No, no, cry out the angels, keep away from this altar before which the saints themselves tremble. *Sancta sanctis—Ad Deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.* He should weep with tears of blood, and he promises himself joy. *Judica me, Deus.* . . .What joy in hell when they hear these words! The devil has taken a record of that impudent challenge. Sacred altar, thou hast heard it. *Quare tristis es, anima mea, et quare conturbas me?* What? Art thou surprised at the sadness and trouble of thy soul? Thinkest thou that thou shouldst experience all the sweet peacefulness of a good conscience when thou art preparing to commit the most horrible of all crimes?

Everything threatens, accuses, and condemns him in the ceremonies and prayers of the sacrifice. Does it become him to sing the canticles of heaven? *Gloria in excelsis Deo.* . . . *Sanctus, sanctus, sanctus!* To say to the people *Dominus vobiscum, Pax Domini, etc.?* How does he dare speak of his innocence : *Ego autem in innocentia mea ingressus sum;* to communicate with the most holy beings of heaven : *Communicantes;* but, above all, how does he dare pronounce the words of the consecration? Can he kiss the altar and not hear a lamenting voice say to him, "Dost thou with a kiss betray the Son of Man?" Can he put forth his hand to touch the adorable Host and not remember the words, "Behold the hand of him who betrays Me is with Me in the dish?"

We have spoken of a single sacrilegious Mass. What if this crime becomes habitual? Are there torments enough in the stronghold of divine vengeance to punish it? O Lord, protect Thy Church from such a terrible calamity. Inspire Thy ministers with that lively faith, that religious awe, with which they should be filled on entering the sanctuary. *Pavete ad sanctuarium meum.* As for me; O Lord, grant that my eyes may lose their sight, that my tongue may be withered, that my life may be cut short; scourge me with all the weapons of Thy merciful justice; but suffer me not to fall into the depths of this abyss.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Multitude and enormity of the crimes comprised in a sacrilegious Mass. St. Liguori enumerates the first. *Indigne conficit, indigne sumit, indigne ministrat, ministrat indigno.* As for

the enormity of those crimes, listen to the language of the Fathers: *Qui indigne abutuntur communione mysterii, quantum in ipsis est, interimunt quem adorant. Gravius peccant offerentes indigne Christum regnantem in coelis, quam qui eum crucifixerunt ambulantem in terris. Nemo deterius peccat quam sacerdos qui indigne celebrat.*

Second Point.—Frightful circumstances which accompany the sacrilegious celebration of Mass. Who is he who commits the sacrilege? A man to whom the Saviour had confided the guardianship of His body. Who is the person attacked? The adorable Person of Jesus Christ. In what place, at what time, during what action? Here we should remember the words of the Gospel, "One of you is a devil." The sacrilegious minister leaves the sacristy. Whither does he go? See what he does, hear what he says, and forget not what he is. O Lord, protect Thy Church from such a monstrous crime.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

THE SACRILEGIOUS MASS. (Continued.)

1.—*How Severely this Crime is Usually Punished.*
2.—*Precautions to be Taken in Order to Avoid Committing it.*

First Point.—As a general rule no crime is punished so severely, in life, in death, in eternity! God generally follows the very just rule which He gave of old to the judges of his people: "According to the measure of the sin shall the measure also of the stripes be." (Deut. xxv. 2.) We have understood the enormity of a crime that is rendered more hideous by its audacious iniquity, a crime that can not be excused on account of the violence of the temptation, since it is committed in cold blood.

No sin should have such terrors for the guilty soul, and yet great compunction is either rare or of short duration amongst this class of sinners. In almost every instance, when the priest feels the sting of remorse whilst ascending the altar, he will be found in a state of serene calmness after his sacrilege. The pious participation in the holy mysteries enlightens the soul. *Cognoverunt eum in fractione panis.* (Luc. xxiv. 35.) The unworthy communion, but particularly the unworthy celebration, brings with it the most profound darkness. A time comes when the sacrilegious priest sees nothing in a supernatural light and, as a consequence, he feels nothing. The Eucharist table becomes for him a punishment and a stone of scandal. "Let their table become as a snare before them, and a recompense and a stumbling-block." (Ps. lxviii. 23.) Satan,

who has entered the soul of this new Judas, strengthens his empire therein. He possesses him, and will not let him see the horrible state of his soul.

What a life is led in this long series of sacrileges! What a death in the midst of these terrifying remembrances! And before the tribunal of God what will be the awakening, what will be the judgment? Alas! is he not already judged? He had said so often: *Sanguis quem potavi adhaereat visceribus meis.* Will not his prayer be heard? Oh, yes, the blood of Jesus Christ adheres to his bowels, it penetrates into the very marrow of his bones; every part of his being is impregnated with it; not, however, in such a way that, *ut non remaneat in me scelerum macula!* That communion will stain his soul more and more; for, alas! he has now by a monstrous contrast united in his heart iniquity to purity itself. He has incorporated with himself his angry Judge; he must expect to be judged with the utmost severity. Has he not eaten and drank "judgment to himself?"

After such a life what a death, what an eternity he must expect! If one mortal sin is punished in hell, what tortures are prepared for the priest who has trampled under foot the Son of God and treated His blood as something unclean. "How much more, do you think, he deserves worse punishments, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath esteemed the blood of the Testament unclean?" (Heb. x. 29.) Behold this sacred blood changed for its profaner into an ocean of fire! and from the bottom of the abyss of infamy we hear the cry of despair: "I have sinned betraying innocent blood!" (Matt. xxvii. 4.) Permit not, O Lord, that the holy Mass, our most efficacious means of sanctification, become our judgment and condemnation! *Non mihi proveniat in judicium et condemnationem.*

Second Point.—Precautions to be taken in order to avoid this great misfortune. He need not fear it, who, by his fidelity to religious exercises, constantly preserves in himself the spirit of faith, and a great delicacy of conscience in regard to charity, disinterestedness, and chastity. The vices opposite these virtues are called by St. Bernard the chariot of the devil, because the spirit of darkness ordinarily makes use of them in order to carry souls to perdition with those who guide them in the ways of evil.

The priest who desires to say Mass worthily every day must carefully watch over his heart in order to keep it free from all aversion, resentment, and bitterness. He is about to celebrate the great mystery of the charity of Jesus Christ; let him, therefore, forget all the insults and injuries of which he has been the object, and let him only remember the meekness and inexhaustible charity

of Jesus Christ praying for His executioners. It is particularly when he approaches the altar that he is commanded to examine his dispositions in this regard. "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go forth to be reconciled to thy brother." (Matt. v. 23.) Is he not fortunate in this, that in forgiving others he can secure his own forgiveness. "Forgive and it shall be forgiven unto you." (Luc. vi. 37.)

He is also vigilant in preventing the desire for filthy lucre from usurping in any of his sacred functions the place of the noble motives of faith; did not many indisputable examples admonish us in this matter, one would be loth to believe to what excess the love of money may lead, when it has once entered the sanctuary. But the most threatening and terrible danger would be relaxation of vigilance and severity in matters concerning purity. It is so easy to wound sacerdotal chastity, and such wounds are so rarely if ever trivial. Where will he stop who has placed his foot on that inclined plane? In a very short time he will have crossed the boundary which separates the angel from the brute; and the man who, in virtue of his character, his titles and functions, held the highest place of honor has lost his intelligence; his instincts are now brutalized. "Man, when he was in honor, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them." (Ps. xlviii. 13.) There is, moreover, no disorder which is so difficult to overcome. The confession of such faults in a priest is so humiliating! Perhaps it is not as complete as it ought to be. Sorrow for such sins, and the determination to avoid the occasion of them, should be very sincere; are these dispositions always efficacious? Ah, how seldom it is that one really overcomes this sin when it has once been committed! *Peccatum maximae adhaerentiae.* (St. Thom.) Whilst the tongue formulates acts of contrition and promises of reform, the heart still throbs with the venom of leprosy.

Three advices of great importance:

I. Never seek to allay your conscience by refusing to listen to its reproaches. If you have reason to think that you have lost the friendship of God by a grievous sin, of whatsoever nature, hasten at once to make a good confession. Fear not to acknowledge yourself guilty; one is no longer a sinner when he has humbled himself before God in the confession which he requires. As soon as you have laved your soul in the blood of the Lamb, you have recovered your right to eat the living bread, and to enter the city of eternal happiness. "Blessed are they that wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb: that they may have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates of the city." (Ap. xxii. 14.)

II. Do not deceive yourself concerning the *necessity* of celebrating the divine mysteries, the *impossibility* of going to confession. Are you really placed in such straitened circumstances? Suppose, however, that you are in that lamentable situation; then pray, bewail your crimes, excite yourself to perfect contrition; such is the last supreme remedy which the all-merciful God extends to the unfortunate priest.

III. Finally, behold one who has fallen so low as to have contracted the habit of celebrating sacrilegiously. He should not, like Judas, lose confidence in the goodness of his Saviour, who glories in forgiving the greatest crimes; let him rather say with David: "Forgive for Thy name's sake, O Lord, Thou wilt pardon my sin; for it is great." (Ps. xxiv. 11.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—As a rule no crime is punished so severely, in life, at death, in eternity. The sacrilegious celebration of Mass stifles remorse. It brings on the unfortunate priest a profound blindness. Satan, who has entered the heart of this new Judas, strengthens his empire therein from day to day. How terrible will be the awaking before the tribunal of God! . . . *Judicium sibi manducat et bibit.*

Second Point.—Precautions to be taken to avoid this great misfortune. Great delicacy of conscience in matters of charity, disinterestedness, and chastity. Three advices of great importance: Never seek to blind yourself by refusing to listen to the reproaches of your conscience. One is no longer a sinner when he has humbled himself before God. Do not deceive yourself concerning the *necessity* of saying Mass or the *impossibility* of going to confession. Should you have unfortunately fallen so low as to have contracted the habit of celebrating sacrilegiously, continue to confide in the infinite goodness of the Saviour.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

THE SIN OF ST. PETER. ITS CAUSES.

1.—*Presumption.*
2.—*Negligence.*
3.—*Imprudence.*

First Point.—Presumption the first cause of the fall of St. Peter. The spirit of God, without whose assistance the strongest man is naught but weakness, is pleased to dwell in the heart of the

humble man alone; the heart of St. Peter was not humble before his fall; he had not the virtue of self-diffidence. When his Master declares to him that later on he will follow Him, but that "he can not now," he answers, "Why can not I follow Thee now? I will give my life for Thee." When Our Lord predicts to His apostles that He will be for them all a subject of scandal, St. Peter answers, "Although all should be scandalized in Thee, I will not." When Our Lord, in order to confound his temerity, announces to him his own terrible fall: "Amen I say to thee, to-day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice" (Marc. xiv, 30), he continues to insist, and, with still stronger determination, "he spoke the more vehemently." He is not afraid to contradict his Master openly. "Although I should die together with Thee, I will not deny Thee." (Ibid.) Fatal presumption, how many tears hast thou not cost the Church! How many times hast not thou overturned many of those who seemed among its strongest supporters, very pillars of strength. Ah, he has very little knowledge of himself who thinks he can depend upon himself, upon his courage, upon the horror which he thinks he has of evil.

Presumption blinds us concerning our weakness, the strength of the enemy, the greatness of the danger. *Quare non possum?* Why can I not go thither . . . see this . . . do this thing? . . . I know myself, I feel able to resist. As to the strength of the enemy, remember that his very apparent weakness constitutes his strength. Presumption blinds us concerning the greatness of the danger. Who would have thought in regard to St. Peter, that there would be danger of apostasy for him in so despicable a temptation? Who would have told it to those strong men of Israel, to those chosen priests, who were the guides and support of souls, that, in laboring to save their brethren from danger, they would perish in it themselves, becoming an example of the most shameful weakness? Why did they not rather say to themselves what they said to others, that occasion creates danger, that diffidence of ourselves makes us avoid it, but that presumption makes us fall into it.

Second Point.—Negligence the second cause of the sin of St. Peter. When we imagine ourselves to be strong we ask for no support to our weakness. Having arrived in the Garden of Olives Jesus had said to His apostles: "Remain here whilst I go and pray: pray, lest you enter into temptation." (Luc. xxii. 40.) How could Peter neglect that serious recommendation, after the distressing prediction which had been made to him? He neglects it, however, and in place of praying he goes to sleep. Ah, how he must have blushed on hearing the mild reproach addressed to him by his Master. "Thou sleepest, Simon, and thou who pretendedst

that thou couldst follow Me into prison and unto death, hast not been able to watch one hour with Me! Watch and pray."

When a priest, though he has already led a long life in fervor, is not intimately convinced of his extreme frailty; when he neglects to strengthen himself with the sacred power of prayer; when he neglects meditation, or performs it carelessly, he will soon learn to his cost, and it may be with scandal to the Church, how deplorable are the consequences of such criminal negligence.

Jesus is taken; Peter after so many promises has already forsaken Him. He is not at His side; he contents himself with following Him from afar. When a priest has ceased to keep holy fervor alive in his soul by pious meditation, he will soon lose that energy necessary for the accomplishment of his duties. He loses all taste for heavenly things, for his sacred functions. His zeal is gone. His life becomes an entirely material sensual life. Ah, how far he is already from Jesus Christ, his guide and his model! *Sequebatur a longe.*

Alas! the sin of Peter has in it something more grevious yet. For how difficult to stop in the way of iniquity, and how rapid is progress in that direction! He had been following his Master at a distance, yet he had followed Him, but now he has ceased to walk. "But Peter sat." Jesus is standing, the object of the insults and ill-treatment of the servants, within a few feet of Peter, who hears the blasphemies and blows. "Prophesy to us, Christ, who is he who struck Thee?" And Peter is still sitting quietly! Where? In what society! What is he doing among these people? "He sat with the ministers at the fire, and warmed himself." (Marc. xiv. 54.) Behold the priest weakened, enervated by successive infidelities, ready to commit any crime, on the very brink of the abyss; one step more and he will plunge into it.

Third Point.—Imprudence the third cause of the fall of St. Peter. Though in such a state of moral exhaustion that the least breath will be enough to make him fall, he exposes himself to occasions so dangerous that men of the stoutest virtue would hardly come off victorious. What business had he, the prince of the apostles, amongst an assembly of criminals, amongst the servants of the high priest who had constituted himself the judge of Jesus Christ, in order to outrage and destroy him. There is never any security in intercourse with the wicked unless we guard ourselves against them. If the priest communicates with the world through other motives than that of charity; if he frequents the company of worldlings simply to kill time, or to seek from creatures for consolations which he finds not with God; if he is not on his guard concerning new acquaintances, or the marks of esteem and

friendship bestowed upon him, he will soon find out by his own experience that human frailty is much greater than he had imagined it to be.

Let us learn wisdom from our misfortunes as the apostles did. For they became more humble and prudent after their fall. The same causes will ever produce the same effects. If I seek for the occasion of sin I shall fall into it. I love poison; its sweetness has a charm for me. Can I promise myself that in tasting it I will not swallow it? I must either shun the reefs or be shipwrecked.

Remember the past; precautions; resolutions for the future.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Presumption the first cause of St. Peter's fall. The Spirit of God, without whose existence the strongest man is naught but weakness, loves to dwell in the humble man only. Peter knew not how to mistrust himself. After his Master had so clearly predicted to him his fall, he dares to contradict Him openly. Ah, how little we know ourselves, when we depend upon our own virtue! Who would have told the prince of the apostles that a temptation so despicable would have caused his apostasy?

Second Point.—Negligence the second cause of the sin of St. Peter. When we believe ourselves strong we seek for no support for our weakness. In vain does Our Lord recommend St. Peter to pray. He feels not the need of prayer. In place of praying he goes to sleep. When a priest, though he has lived a long time in fervor, neglects to warm his soul at the fire of meditation, he will immediately fall into tepidity. How far will he not go, after placing his foot on the inclined plane? A life all sensual, the forgetting of God and of the things of God. . . . Behold he stands on the brink of the abyss.

Third Point.—Imprudence the third cause of the sin of St. Peter. Being in a state of moral exhaustion, when the least breath would suffice to upset him, he exposes himself to the most dangerous occasions. What business had he in that assembly of wicked men? Either I must avoid the reefs, or I must expect to be shipwrecked. I will, with God's assistance, be forewarned by the example of St. Peter.

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

THE SIN OF ST. PETER. (Continued.)

1.—*Its Circumstances.*
2.—*Its Enormity.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself St. Peter talking with the soldiers and the servants of the Pretorium, trying to appear unconcerned, so that he may not be known. "Peter was with them standing and warming himself." (Joan. xviii. 18, 25.)

Second Prelude.—Beg of God fully to understand that if you rely solely on your own strength you are exposed to the commission of every sin, and that there is for you no security save in prayer and vigilance.

First Point.—Circumstances of the sin of St. Peter. They are generally found in the sins of the priest. Here are some of them:

I. Peter falls, notwithstanding his most public professions of faith and sincere declarations of unalterable devotedness. The Saviour having asked His apostles, "Whom do men say that the Son of man is?" they answered by telling Him what was said of Him. "Some say that Thou art John the Baptist, others Elias, others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." "But you, whom do you say that I am?" Peter, anticipating the response of the others, answered at once: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God." This was such an admirable profession of faith that it obtained for him the congratulations of his Master: "Blessed art Thou, Simon, son of Jonas;" and the most glorious privileges: "And I say to thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and to thee I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. xvi. 18, 19.) On another occasion Jesus, seeing himself forsaken by a great number of His disciples, asked those around him if they also thought of leaving Him? St. Peter answered with his usual ardor: "To whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life; and we have believed and know that Thou art Christ, the Son of God." (Joan. vi. 69, 70.) On every occasion he shows the same attachment to the Saviour, the same determination to be faithful unto Him.

And you, ministers of Jesus, had you not often promised Him before your fall that you would serve Him till your last breath? Had you not acknowledged, taught, and proclaimed that to Him alone belonged the homage of all hearts? When you renounced the world and entered the ecclesiastical state was not your conduct on that day a solemn declaration of your sentiments regarding

His person? Was it not proclaiming publicly: The world does not know Thee, O Lord Jesus, and therefore it does not adore Thee But Thou art the Son of the living God. Thou hast the words of eternal life: "Thou shalt be the portion of my inheritance!"

II. Peter sins, notwithstanding all the light, all the admonitions and favors he had received from Jesus Christ. He had heard His public discourses and His private instructions, nay, he had heard the eternal Father on Mount Thabor, proclaiming His divinity, recommending Him to the veneration and love of His disciples. "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." (Matt. xvii. 5.) And that word had made upon him such an impression that he had fallen with his face to the ground. A moment before his fall Jesus had said to him, "Watch, O Peter, watch and pray; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Could he moreover have so soon forgotten the touching marks of affection lavished upon him by his Master? His lips were still wet with the divine blood which he had just drunk for the first time at the Eucharistic banquet.

And you, O Priest, are you much less privileged in all these respects? When you fall, are you not like St. Peter, a sinner who had been enlightened and warned? Had not your fall, like his, been predicted? How many times, and in how many different ways, had you not been told that you would go farther than you intended to, and that by loving danger you would find your ruin therein? As to favors, need we recall to your mind those which were lavished upon you?

III. Peter falls notwithstanding the apparently trivial nature of the temptation. A servant maid draws near; she makes no threat, she simply says: "Are you not also a disciple of that man?" Would it not have seemed that this was no more than a light wavelet rolling up against a great rock? Alas, it was enough to shake it to its very foundation, and shatter it into atoms: "No, I know not what you say. I know Him not." He denies Him before all. A mean, cowardly soul has no courage, save to cover its cowardice; the fear of appearing guilty makes one add effrontery to crime. Had I seen Peter pale at the sight of the sword threatening his life, I might have believed that terror had troubled his reason, and whilst condemning, I would pity him; but such was not the case; a servant maid speaks and he is overcome; he who thought himself invincible, he whom we might have compared to a wall of brass, falls when a word is spoken. He succumbs at the first attack. *Ecce ad unius aurae flatum columna firmissima tota contremuit.* (St. Aug.)

O my God, who will save me from myself, from my own frailty?

Thou alone art my strength; if Thou ceasest to sustain me I shall fall to the bottom of the abyss. *Tu es, Deus, fortitudo mea. Deus, in adjutorium meum intende.*

Second Point.—He sins not once only, but three times; and we can not therefore suppose that it was through surprise.

I. After a first experience of his weakness he goes out into the vestibule, "and the cock crows." How is it that this crowing does not remind him of the prediction of Jesus Christ? How often, O my God, didst Thou not speak to my soul, fill it with alarm, at the very moment that I was offending Thee! I heard Thy voice, and would not obey. I trembled, and yet I would not desist. . . . After quitting the occasion of his fall Peter returns to the same spot; must we wonder that he relapsed!

II. The second fall is lower than the first. He does not now simply declare that he does not know "that man," but he affirms it with an oath. "And again he denied with an oath: I know not that man." (Matt. xxvi. 72.) The third time he adds horrible imprecations to perjury. "Then he began to curse and to swear: I know not the man of whom you speak." It amounts to saying, Thou hearest me, and Thou holdest the lightning in Thy hand. Crush me if I speak contrary to my knowledge, when I say that I know not Jesus! . . . And this is the language of Peter! At the first crime conscience is disturbed; at the second fear has grown less; at the third fear gives place to imprudence; nothing will henceforth stop the career of crime. Such is the bad effect of relapse. By committing sins I strengthen my enemy, I weaken myself, I stray from the path of salvation.

III. At what moment does Peter become guilty of that perjury and apostasy? When Our Lord Jesus Christ is so much in need of the sympathy of a friend, when He is insulted and spit upon by the servants. The apostle hears the blows, he hears the blasphemies. "Prophesy, O Christ, who it is that struck Thee." (Matt. xxvi. 68.) To all this and to other questions, he simply answers, I am not His disciple; I have nothing in common with Him. "I know not this man of whom you speak." (Marc. xiv. 71.) Oh, horrible, sacrilegious words! How was it that Peter, in pronouncing them, did not feel his lips tremble, his tongue grow cold and his heart swell to bursting? *Hominem istum quem dicitis!* In this contemptuous manner he speaks of Jesus! Did he ignore the sad consequence which must follow from his cruel defection? The people loved the Son of God; they had often proclaimed it; but what must they have thought when they saw all His apostles forsake Him; when they saw Peter, who had embraced His cause with greater ardor, denying Him at the voice of a serving maid? "As

the idolatry of Aaron was a great scandal to the Hebrews, so the denial of Peter was an enormous scandal to the Jews." (Ventura.)

Was there anything more wanting to shake their faith? Was not this putting a terrible weapon in the hands of the Saviour's enemies, giving credit to their calumnies, justifying their hatred? . . . Soon, however, Peter weeps bitterly over his crime; let us rise as he did if we have unfortunately imitated him in his fall.

Thou placest under my eyes, O Lord, in the same page of Thy Gospel, two very different examples, relating to two priests, two of Thy apostles who were great sinners. The one is a traitor who puts on the appearance of friendship in order to give Thee up to Thy executioners; the other a coward who denies Thee at the first appearance of danger. But whilst Peter, relying on Thy infinite mercy, goes and seeks for pardon in Thy Sacred Heart, which he cruelly wounded, Judas gives that heart another stab still deeper than the former in doubting that it would welcome back the repenting sinner. I know which of the two I will take for my model. I abhor the despair of Judas; I will imitate St. Peter, and especially his example of confidence. O Jesus, cast upon me that merciful glance of Thine which changed the heart of Thy apostle. *Jesu, labentes respice, et nos videndo, corrige. Si respicis, labes cadunt, fletuque culpa solvitur.* (Hymn. Dom. ad Laud.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Circumstances of the sin of St. Peter. They are nearly all found in the sins of the priest. I. Peter falls notwithstanding the most public professions of faith and the sincere declarations of unalterable devotedness. Had not I also, O Lord, promised Thee many times that I would serve Thee till my last breath! II. Peter falls notwithstanding all the lights, the admonitions, all the blessings he had received from his Master. . . . And was not I equally favored in every respect? III. Peter falls notwithstanding the apparent lightness of his temptation. O dreadful frailty! My God, save me from myself.

Second Point.—He falls, not once, but three times, not even resisting the first attack. . . . I. After once quitting the occasion of his sin he returns to it; need we wonder that he falls? II. The second fall is deeper than the first. He affirms with an oath that he does not know "that man." At the third fall, to perjury he adds the most horrible oaths. O sad effect of sin! The second costs less than the first. The more frequently I relapse the more I strengthen my enemy, whilst weakening myself. III. At what time does Peter so wound the heart of Jesus Christ? At the time that this

good Master has need of the sympathy of a friend. He was then being spit upon and struck by impudent, cruel menials. Could Peter be ignorant of the sad effect his defection would produce in the minds of the people? Did he not know how dreadful was the weapon he put in the hands of our Saviour's enemies? But this great sinner will soon be converted. We fell like St. Peter. Let us rise like St. Peter.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

PERSONAL SINS.

1.—*The Great Number of my own Sins.*

2.—*The Nature and Deformity of those Sins in Themselves.*

3.—*Their Enormity with Regard to Him who Committed Them.*

First Prelude.—Place yourself in the presence of Jesus Christ, like the lepers who came and asked Him to heal them; or like a criminal loaded with chains, appearing before his judge.

Second Prelude.—Fill my heart, O Lord, with all those sentiments of confusion and repentance, which the remembrance of my faults should inspire me with, and give me an abundance of tears to lament them. "Who will give water to my head, and a fountain of tears to my eyes?" (Jer. ix. 1.)

First Point.—The great number of my own sins. It is not now in the rebellious angels, in Adam or St. Peter that I will consider sin; it is nearer home, it is within myself. The rebellious angels, Adam, and many reprobates, had committed one sin only; in comparison with that one sin, so severely, yet so justly punished, I will consider the almost countless multitude of my own transgressions.

Sins committed at all times. In my childhood. What use did I make of the first rays of my intelligence, of the first movements of my heart, of the first admonitions of my conscience? Was it to God and to Him alone that I offered the homage of my liberty? I became a sinner as early as it was possible for me to be one. *Tantillus homo, et tantus peccator.* (St. Aug.) In my youth, as I grew to have a better understanding of the claims of God on my own love, I became the more guilty. What disorder in my thoughts, in my desires! What blind subserviency to my passions! At a more mature age the object of my affections changed, but they remained equally criminal. Was there a time or a day in my life which was not marked by some deplorable error or weakness?

Sins committed in all places. Under the roof of my parent's

house where the Lord welcomed me in bestowing upon me the first marks of His goodness; in the schools which I frequented in order to acquire learning. What did I find there in many instances? In the scenes of my amusements, even in the most holy places, in Thy very house, O my God! Nay, at the very foot of Thy altar. . . . I find that with every place is connected the remembrance of some iniquity. *Ubi, oro te, Deus, ubi et quando innocens fui?* (St. Aug. Conf.)

When I think of my companions, of my pleasures, of my occupations, everything reminds me of transgressions. If I consider the laws of God, is there one that I never sinned against? Did I not succumb to the greater part of my temptations? Is there any one of my mortal or bodily faculties which did not become an instrument of sin? If I reflect upon the functions which I performed as a priest, in the pulpit, in the confessional, the visitation of the sick, in the midst of children, . . . in the recitation of the breviary, at the altar, how innumerable my prevarications! O Lord almighty, I confess it; I have sinned, I have sinned exceedingly. *Confiteor Deo omnipotenti, . . . quia peccavi nimis.*

Second Point.—Nature and deformity of these sins in themselves. They must possess supreme deformity, since they are infinitely opposed to sovereign beauty. By sinning I revolted against the Lord; I presumed to make a trial of strength with the almighty God. What audacity! By sinning I offended against all the perfections of God: His power, since I knew that He could destroy me at the very moment of my transgressions; His wisdom and goodness, in forsaking His sweet and amiable laws, in order to follow the bent of my passions; His immensity and holiness, in forcing Him, as it were, to be the witness of my disorders. . .What iniquity! By sinning I did not only show contempt of my sovereign benefactor, but turned against Him, all His blessings; using to outrage Him all that He had given me to serve Him. . . . What ingratitude! By sinning I preferred death to life, hell to heaven, Satan to Jesus Christ. . . . I forsook a tender father in order to serve a perfidious master, the most cruel of all tyrants! . . . What blindness, what folly! O my soul, couldst thou but see thyself, in the state to which so many abominations have reduced thee! Thy rights, thy merits lost, thy beauty changed into monstrous deformity, thou shouldst be terrified at such a sight!

Third Point.—Who is he who committed them? If I consider myself as man, such is my lowliness, that I must put myself on a level with nothingness; but what am I when compared to all mankind? What are all men when compared to the angels, and what are the angels and all creatures compared to God? What

am I then in presence of that infinite Majesty, before whom all the nations are as if they were not? "All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all." (Isaias.) I have dared to resist this great God, to resist Him to His face, and impudently to tell Him: In vain wilt Thou command, I will not obey. "Thou hast lifted thyself up against the Lord of heaven." (Dan. v. 22, 23.) "Thou hast said, I will not serve." (Jer.) What must I think of my sins, if I consider myself as a priest? A priest is the man of God, the angel of the Lord, another Jesus Christ. Being the man of God, I must cause Him to be honored, . . . and I outrage Him! This dignity requires that I possess all the virtues. "But thou, O man of God, . . . pursue justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness." (1 Tim.) What are those that I practise? Being an angel of the Lord, I should be fervent and faithful in the accomplishment of His will. *Ministri ejus, qui facitis voluntatem ejus.* I should be zealous for the salvation of souls. "Are they not all ministering spirits sent to minister?" (Heb. i. 14.) And I rebel against God, and I give scandal to souls! . . Am I an angel or a devil when I cast into hell those whom I was obliged to lead to heaven? Do I represent Jesus Christ when I preach? "Which of you shall convince me of sin?" (Joan. viii. 46.) "Holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. vii. 26.)

How is it that all the creatures of God did not rise up against me after I committed sins so numerous and so grievous? How is it that they continued to serve me when I was outraging their Creator, who is also mine? O God, all-patient, I bless Thee! I humbly confess that I deserve to be stripped of all the blessings, of all the graces, which I so criminally abused. I beg of Jesus Christ crucified to offer for me to His Father that abyss of sufferings and humiliations into which He plunged for my salvation. *Domine, etsi ego commisi unde me damnare potes, tu non amisisti unde salvare soles.* (St. Aug.) *Da misericordiam misero poenitenti, qui tamdiu pepercisti peccatori.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The great number of my own sins. I will establish a parallel between the one sin of Adam, of the angels, and of many reprobates, and my own sins which are almost innumerable. Sins committed at all times. During my childhood, my youth, and at a more advanced age, what use did I make of all the blessings of nature or of grace that I received from the Lord? Sins committed in all places, in the house of my parents. . . . In Thy very house, O God, I find a remembrance of my sins. "Where, O

Lord, and when was I ever innocent in Thy eyes?" (St. Aug.) Sins in all the situations of my past life. Sins of all my senses, of all my faculties. . . . Joy and sadness, success and reverses—I abused all. *Confiteor Deo . . . quia peccavi nimis.*

Second Point.—Deformity of those sins in themselves. I rebelled against the Most High. I offended against all the perfections of God! What iniquity! I preferred death to life, hell to heaven, Satan to Jesus Christ! What blindness, what folly!

Third Point.—The malice of sins considered in him who commits them. What is a man? What are all men compared to the angels? The angels compared to God? What am I in presence of that infinite Majesty? And I dared resist him openly! Being a Christian, my sins on that account should inspire me with greater horror. What then, if I consider myself as a priest! the man of God, the angel of the Lord!

MEDITATION XL.

REPETITION OF THE PRECEDING ONES. MOTIVES WHICH SHOULD FILL ME WITH HORROR FOR SIN.

All the motives of repentance and sorrow contained in the three preceding meditations may be summed up in these words, *Count up, weigh,* and *measure: count up* the multitude of sins which you have committed; *weigh* their grievousnesss in their consequences; *measure* their extent in the malice and perversity which they contain.

First Point.—Recall to memory the sins committed at different ages of your life, in the places where you lived, the positions which you occupied; then in order to detest them more profoundly make the following reflections:

I. If one grievous fault deserves hell, how many hells does he deserve who has committed so many faults of this kind that he can remember only the smaller part of them?

II. If Lucifer, who was a wonder of beauty, did by one thought of pride, which lasted only a moment, become so horrible a monster that one of the great torments of the reprobate will be to behold him eternally, who will be able to bear the sight of a soul, but particularly of the soul of a priest, soiled by all kinds of sin committed time and again? One drop of poison by falling upon the angel, the chief work of creation, a vessel of glory destined for ornamentation of heaven, has so far disfigured him as to make him a vessel of wrath, which God has broken and cast into the

abyss; but if the same poison fell upon my soul like a swollen torrent, what must be my degradation, what wrath have I not kindled against myself in the heart of the thrice-holy God?

III. If every act of disobedience against the law of God is an offence against each of His infinite perfections, a wound given to His heart—ah, how many times did I not outrage this great God, how often did I not wound this adorable heart, to which I owed so much gratitude, so much devotion, so much love!

IV. Each mortal sin makes me a slave of the devil, gives him a right to torture me as his victim for all eternity; but after my countless transgressions, how strong must not be his power over me if, unfortunately, I have not obtained pardon.

V. If by each of my sins I have contracted such a debt toward the justice of God that the blood of Jesus Christ alone can atone for it, ought I not fear to be treated as an insolvent debtor, and to be cast into exterior darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!

Second Point. — Grievousness of my sins. I take in hand the balance of the sanctuary, and weigh the consequences of my prevarications as priest. I remember the injuries I have done to God by placing Him in my estimation below the vile satisfaction which sin promised, by cruelly betraying His cause and representing Him so badly before the people; I remember the harm done to the Church triumphant by depriving it of the joy which it expected from my zeal and piety; to the suffering Church, which did not receive from me the assistance I was bound to give it; to the Church militant, which I dishonored, whose sacraments I may have profaned, whose children I have scandalized; the injury I have done to so many souls who had a right to my mediation and zeal, and which I could so easily have saved. As to myself, I have lost all; my dignity, my peace, my liberty, the friendship of my God, my merits, my eternal happiness. I have deserved to draw down upon me every calamity. Had I died in the sad state to which sin had reduced me, all would be lost; the kingdom of heaven would be closed against me forever, my soul and my body would have been condemned to eternal torments!

I represent to myself in the midst of the torments of hell a priest who has been cast away from God after one mortal sin. He had received fewer graces than I; he had practised great virtues, and persevered a long time in righteousness. Had death carried him off a little earlier, he would have been placed amidst the angels, in an ocean of delights—and behold him in an ocean of fire. Behold him amongst the devils, and his eternal occupation will be to curse God and himself. Such is the work of a single sin; and

He who punishes so frightfully is an infinitely good, infinitely merciful Father; He had loved that priest infinitely more than a mother can love her only-begotten son.

O my God, hadst thou cited me before Thy tribunal after the first mortal sin which I committed, I should have to acknowledge, whilst bearing the weight of Thy dreadful vengeance, that all Thy judgments are just.

How patiently hast Thou not spared me, when everything urged Thee to destroy me; the interest of Thy glory which I outraged, and of Thy grace which I trampled under foot, and of the souls which I scandalized! How kindly Thou hast waited for me, continuing my existence, giving me the means of approaching Thee and of meriting heaven! *Misericordia tua magna est super me, et eruisti animam meam ex inferno inferiori.*

Third Point.—Malice of sin. When I think of the perversity which the commission of sin supposes, I find everywhere the infinite—for I might compare it with the greatness of God whom I have offended: *Who is like unto God!*—and the splendor of the possessions of which I either deprived or endeavored to deprive Him. I deprived Him of His glory by despising Him; I had intended to deprive Him of His sanctity, of His justice, of His immensity—in a word, of all those attributes which condemned and opposed me in the act of sin; in other words, I desired to destroy His very being: *Peccatum, quantum in se est, Deum perimit.* (St. Ber.) I must judge of my sins by the blessings which I received. Every one of these was infinite in the motive which led God to grant it, which was His love; infinite also in the happiness which was the end for which it was granted; for, what else did my adorable benefactor desire, but to lead me to supreme felicity? I must measure my sins by the insults and sufferings of Jesus Christ. When I sinned I rendered the merits of His death useless to myself. I threw down His cross, or rather I took up again that cross of sorrow and infamy, in order to nail my Redeemer to it once more! "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, and making Him a mockery." (Heb. vi. 6.)

End by the triple colloquy of Meditation XXVIII, page 117.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Count up the multitude of your sins. If one mortal sin deserves hell, how many hells did I not deserve! If Lucifer by committing one mortal sin, became such a hideous monster, what must be the deformity of my soul!

If one mortal sin makes a man the slave of the devil, what power must he not have over me who have committed so many!

If each mortal sin is a debt contracted toward the justice of God, have not my countless transgressions made me an insolvent debtor!

Second Point.—Grievousness of your sins. Remember the injury done to God, by placing Him, in your estimation, below everything that is most vile. How did you represent almighty God before the people? Remember the wrong done to the Church triumphant, suffering, and militant. By sin I have lost all; I have deserved to draw down upon me every calamity.

Third Point.—Malice of your sins. Reflecting on this subject, I meet everywhere with the infinite, for I must measure these transgressions by comparing them with the greatness of God, and His divine perfections; with the blessings I received from Him, with the humiliations and sufferings of Jesus Christ. I made useless for me the merits of His death, and renewed His Passion.

MEDITATION XLI.

SOURCE OF OUR SINS. THE PASSIONS.

1.—*We should Fear all the Passions, because They all Tempt us to Commit Sin.*

2.—*We should especially Fear the Passions which Disguise Themselves, because They Lead to the Greatest Excesses.*

We shall never attain that eminent purity which constitutes the glory and prepares the happiness of the priest if our hatred for sin does not extend to its causes. From the stream let us mount to the source in order to endeavor to exhaust its flow.

First Point.—We should fear all the passions, because they all tempt us to offend God. They deceive, they flatter, they tyrannize over, and in this way they make us fall, and keep us in the sad state of sin.

I. The clouds hide from us the beauty of the sun; our disorderly inclinations darken the light of faith, nay, the light of reason itself. Think of Cain, admiring the innocence of Abel, feeling for him as a brother! Recall to mind the conduct of those two infamous old men, trying to ruin the virtue of Susanna which they were bound to protect; could they not remember their gray hair, and the high office which they filled? Recall to mind Judas; the meekness and tender words of Jesus! What must be the feelings of the priest, when he remembers his dignity, the veneration of which he is the object, the holy doctrine which he preaches, the functions which he performs, the dress which he wears? But as soon as

passion has entered a soul, it plunges it into such a depth of darkness that is seems not to see what to others is as visible as the sun. "Fire has fallen on them and they shall not see the sun." (Ps. lvii. 9.)

Disorderly love of oneself is the source of every passion; and yet we always try to believe that there is no harm in what pleases us. *Quodcumque volumus, sanctum est.* (St. Aug.) Some excuse is at least always found, or violence of the passion itself is brought forward as such. We see, however, more than we would like to see, and iniquity consists in refusing to see; for absolute blindness is rare, and, notwithstanding the passion, we discover the law which commands, the crime which violates it, and the torments which will avenge it.

II. Passions flatter us; by the enjoyments which they promise they seduce the heart and destroy the will. In vain do reason and conscience raise their voices, in vain does God threaten—we will not listen to anything. Imagination becomes excited, it exaggerates the expected enjoyment, and we fall back into sin. I will avoid this misfortune, O my God, by tearing myself away at the very beginning from the seductions of passions; and this I will do let the sacrifice be what it may. If my will be sincere, Thy grace will sustain me, and cause me to triumph over my own heart, which is the only enemy that I should dread, for all the devils are vanquished as soon as I have overcome myself.

III. Passions are tyrants. By granting them the least satisfaction I increase their power, I make them exacting, imperious. I withdraw from myself the strength which I give them. In the first instance I yielded to their importunate solicitations; very soon I will refuse them nothing, and my transgressions will become habitual. A sinful habit is like an iron chain which binds our will: *Ligatus eram ferrea mea voluntate.* (St. Aug.) How lamentable the state of a priest whose office it is to exhort others to fight their passions and has himself become the slave of his own passions! He satisfies them also, but does he satisfy his conscience? What use to have gratified one's passion, if the soul is filled with trouble, and the heart tormented with anguish! "Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil." (Rom. ii. 9.) Such will be the case of any sinner; but if this sinner be a minister of God, the shame will be still more crushing, the remorse more keenly felt, the tribulation and anguish more heartrending. Ah, let us fear all our passions, seeing whither they lead us.

Second Point.—We should peculiarly fear the passions which disguise themselves, because they lead to the greatest excesses. —Passions disguise themselves either in order to conceal their crimes or to multiply them, or to afford security to the transgressor.

I. Crime unmasked will always be hateful, even to the very man who committed it; for conscience will always represent it as opposed to order, to reason, to the laws of justice written in the hearts of all men; and if crime be hateful to the transgressor, it certainly will be such to those who witness it. Passion disguises itself, in order to excuse the hatred and shame which are due to it. Who would believe that Judas, who was a thief, had wished to be thought the friend of the poor? How could they detect covetousness concealed under the cloak of charity? Was it not, however, through covetousness that he said on one occasion: "Why this loss? Why did they not sell this ointment and give the price of it to the poor?" This veil under which the transgressor disguises himself is a new crime, and he must expect to be doubly punished, namely, for the commandment which he transgresses, and for his hypocrisy.

II. Passions disguise themselves in order to multiply crime. The passion which shows itself openly will generally be kept down, or at least impeded in its transgressions; but if it succeeds in concealing itself nothing will stop it; it will give way to the greatest excesses. Was it not by putting over their hatred of Jesus Christ a mask of religion and zeal for the public weal that the Pharisees consummated a series of iniquities by the greatest of all crimes, the murder of the Son of God? How many secret abominations are the consequences of a shameful passion, when it succeeds in entering the sanctuary and there disguises itself under the veil of modesty, zeal, or piety! If an unworthy priest had not some virtues, at least apparently, he would deceive no one, and would have to hide his head for shame; he might be brought back to his virtue by his remorse, but when he commits sin under the cloak of devotion, who will prevent him from multiplying his crimes, and from falling into the sleep of a most fatal security?

III. Passions disguise themselves in order to afford security to the transgressor. How many artifices, how many crooked means are used in order to hide from the eyes of men the disorder of certain passions! Can they also, O my God, keep them concealed from Thy ever-vigilant eye, from that eye which searches the very heart? Can they hope to deceive Thy justice, that eternal justice, ever ready to punish sin? Often, when all other means have become powerless to avoid exposure, they will undertake to stifle suspicions by impudence. Behold the conduct of Judas!

The sad declaration of Jesus to His disciples, that one of them will betray Him, is a thunderbolt which confounds them all. Each says to himself, "He who speaks is God; can we ignore the truth or disguise?" Each one fears, each one questions himself, no one

dares trust his own conscience; but treacherous Judas, he who knew this word was addressed to him, is the only one who seems not to be alarmed, and he coolly asks in his turn, "Is it I, O Lord?" Such is in general the character of all passions. There is, however one of them that it more impudent than all the rest, and that is impurity. Lying, deceitfulness, perjury, sacrilege, are, as it were, its salaried hirelings. Even when sin has been detected in its very occurrence, transgressors will continue to say, "Is it I?" This hideous passion tries sometimes to conceal itself by putting on an air of effrontery, which of itself would suffice to unmask it.

Let us bewail the havoc committed by our passions. Let us behold their fruits in that almost countless number of sins which we have committed, and deplore our past imprudence in increasing their strength by yielding to them.

St. Ambrose compares our passions to the fever which had attacked the mother-in-law of St. Peter. *Febris nostra, avaritia est; febris nostra, libido est; febris nostra, luxuria est; febris nostra, ambitio est; febris nostra, iracundia est.* (Lib. 4, in Luc., c. 4.) But Jesus entered the house of the sick woman and healed her. Since we are about to receive the adorable Physician of our souls, let us beseech Him to glorify His power and goodness, by granting us a cure which will be most glorious for Him, and most important for us.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—All the passions ought to be dreaded, because they all lead to the commission of sin. I. By deceiving us. As the clouds darken the brightness of the sun, so the passions darken the light of faith. We voluntarily blind ourselves; we will not see the evil of that which is agreeable to passion; we, however, continue to see more than we would like to see, and resistance to light is what constitutes iniquity. II. By flattering us. By the gratifications which they promise they seduce our heart and carry away our will. Ah, how important it is to tear oneself at once from the charms of the passion! III. By tyrannizing over us. If I have been so weak as to yield to them in some way, I have increased their power, I have withdrawn from myself the strength which I gave them; my frequent relapses have soon become a habit; now a habit may be compared to an iron chain; when will it be broken?

Second Point.—Of all the passions, those which are the most to be dreaded are those which disguise themselves, either in order to conceal the crime, or to multiply it, or to offer security to the

transgressor in his crime. Passion disguises itself, in order to escape the hatred and shame which are due to it. Who would believe that Judas, a thief, had desired to pass for the friend and advocate of the poor? "Why did they not sell this unguent, and give the price of it to the poor?" It was by putting over their hatred of Jesus Christ the mask of religion and of zeal for the public weal that the Pharisees by a series of iniquities came to commit the most awful crime, viz., the murder of the Son of God. Finally, the passions disguise themselves in order to give security to the sinner in his crime. How many are the artifices, the ambiguous ways used to conceal from the eyes of man whatever is revolting in crime. Sometimes they will go so far as to try to stifle suspicions by repeated impudence. Remember the audacity of Judas saying to his Master, "Master, is it I that will betray Thee?"

MEDITATION XLII.

PRIDE THE BEGINNING OF EVERY SIN.

1.—*Why God Punishes Pride more Severely than other Vices.*
2.—*Particular Reasons why He should Hate It.*

Man never sins except in order to escape some pain, or to procure for himself some gratification; in every instance the sinner prefers himself to God, in every instance pride excites the spirit of rebellion. "I will not serve." Let us wage the most earnest war against the most detestable of all vices.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ hearing the apostles quarreling amongst themselves concerning pre-eminence. He calls to Him a child, places him in their midst, and says to them: "Unless you be converted, and become as this child, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Second Prelude.—O God, the exaltation of the humble, and the strength of the weak, inspire us with sentiments in keeping with our nothingness, and Thy infinite greatness.

First Point.—Why God hates pride more than any other vice. St. Augustine answers: "Because this vice attacks God more directly, more audaciously than any other vice." It would drag Him from His throne and annihilate His immortality. Of pride especially we should say with St. Bernard: *Quantum in ipso est, Deum perimit;* it is the denying of the most essential attributes of the Divinity.

For a man governed by this passion God is not "first and last,"

the beginning and the end; He is not the sovereign Lord of all things: *Mea sunt omnia.* The proud man glories in his real or pretended qualities, as if they came from himself alone. In vain does St. Paul say, "What hast thou, that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) God therefore is not for him the adorable source from which all blessings flow. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end." The proud man, far from referring to God what he does and says . . . refers all to his own glorification and will have no praise given to any one save himself; and God therefore is not for him that last end to which all should be referred. "Do all for the glory of God." The proud man affects to be independent, and considers as his own property goods of which he is the mere tenant. God is not for him the sovereign of the universe, the Lord of lords, to whom all things belong. "I am the Lord."

I should especially dwell upon the following consideration: viz., that this vice, already so hateful in itself, is still more so in the man who has been appointed by the Almighty to teach men how to respect and obey Him.

A monarch learns that some of his subjects have raised the standard of rebellion against him. He selects one of the officers of his court whom he has loaded with blessings, and says to him, "Go, I depend upon you; bring back to my service those erring, rebellious subjects." The officer starts out, fully provided with all that is necessary to fulfil his mission. Very soon, however, he himself joins the rebels, places himself at their head and attempts to become their monarch, instead of bringing them back to the allegiance of their lawful sovereign. Such a crime would be exceedingly grievous. Such is the crime of the proud priest. The King of kings, after raising me to the rank of His friends, invests me with His powers; so far honors me with His confidence as to intrust me with the office of sustaining His rights, of defending His disregarded authority . . and I dare to supplant Him in the esteem and affection of His children! I betray His interests by appropriating to myself the honor and praise due to Him alone! Is not this a detestable felony, and high treason against God?

Second Point.—Special reasons why we should detest pride. It deprives us of grace, takes away our merits, destroys our virtues, draws terrible punishments upon us. Oh, how cruel a tyrant pride is! Woe to those who are its slaves!

I. It deprives us of grace. Prayer is the ordinary channel of grace. God is rich, but only "*toward those who invoke Him.*" (Rom. x. 12.) A proud man prays little, and prays amiss; how could

he have an abundant part in the munificence of God? He prays but little, for he feels not the need of prayer. Infatuated as he is with himself or what he thinks himself to be, he has nothing to ask. Moreover, to pray is to confess our misery, to acknowledge our dependence, our weakness, our nothingness before God; but is there anything so contrary to the disposition of the proud man? He prays amiss. For a good prayer recollection is indispensable, but recollection is impossible to him whose soul is disturbed. To seek tranquility in a proud heart is to look for calm weather in the midst of the storm. Who has ever found it possible to attend to prayer when the heart is under the influence of passion?

II. It does away with our merit. What benefit shall I draw from my actions if pride be their motive? The Pharisees made long prayers, fasted rigorously, scrupulously observed the least points of the law, and yet Our Lord loads them with his malediction. Pride, then, is not one of those indolent passions which repel application and labor; quite the contrary—it excites man to exertion. Such a priest is pointed out as a model of zeal and activity; every one speaks of the good he does. . . . Alas, when he will appear before the tribunal of God, how many of those works will be reckoned useless or brought forth against him as evil because pride was their sole principle! I preach, I catechise, I establish pious practices, I am the soul of every holy undertaking; the world says of me that I do much for God's glory; and yet if I do not change, should I not fear the dreadful sentence: "The unprofitable servant cast ye out into the exterior darkness"? (Matt. xxv. 31.) I bear the hardships of an apostle in order to prepare for myself the fate of a demon.

III. Pride ruins our virtues. They are grounded on faith, but the foundation itself is none but humility. Will a presumptuous spirit consent to respect the venerable obscurity of our mysteries? We remember those powerful geniuses from whom the Church expected great consolation, but which caused her to shed so many tears; alas! "they became vain in their thoughts, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Rom. i. 21.) At least without humility one will not have that lively faith, those gifts of council and wisdom so useful to the priest, so necessary to a spiritual director. "I confess to Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones." (Matt. xi. 25.)

No virtue can exist together with pride; neither can patience, meekness, apostolic zeal, nor good harmony between the members of the same clergy. If charity is a cement which unites, pride is the most powerful of all dissolvents. "Among the proud their

are always contentions." (Prov. xiii. 10.) Charity itself has no more dreadful enemy than pride; the lust of the flesh nearly always follows the lust of the mind. The crown of charity sits firmly on the brow of none but the humble.

IV. Punishments and misfortunes of the proud. God will not permit any one to rob Him with impunity of a privilege which He shall yield to no one, as He has declared it: "I will not give My glory to another." (Is. xlii. 8.) "He resists the proud." It is not said that He withdraws from them His grace and His support; it is declared that He resists them, opposes power to power; and because, according to the decree of God, "by what things a man sinneth, by the same also he is tormented" (Sap. xi. 17), the more desirous the proud man is of glory, the more he is loaded with humiliations. "Where pride is, there also shall be reproach." (Prov. xi. 2.) He desires to be honored; he shall be despised. He shall find realized in himself the prophecy of Jesus Christ: "He who exalteth himself shall be humbled. He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble." There is always to be found a Mardochius in the way of an Aman to change the triumph into despair. But those punishments are punishments of mercy; behold others more frightful. It is on the Judgment Day and in eternity that the proud man will be crushed under the weight of divine vengeance. "The day of the Lord upon every one that is proud and high-minded, and upon every one that is arrogant." (Is. ii. 11.) This crime is considered by St. Gregory as an evident sign of reprobation. *Evidentissimum reproborum signum est superbia.* Let us search our hearts, let us bewail the past, and never cease to strive against the baneful inclination which will exist within us as long as we live.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Why does God hate pride more than any other vice? It attacks God in the most direct and daring manner. It is the denying of the most essential attributes of the Divinity. For the man who is a slave of pride God is not the sovereign Lord to whom all things belong. He is not the first source of all that is good, the last end to which everything should be directed. The proud man will have the incense of praise offered to none but to himself. This vice is particularly hateful in a priest.

Second Point.—Special reasons why we should detest pride. I. It deprives us of grace. The proud man prays but little; he feels not the need of prayer; if to pray is to humble one's self, the proud man prays amiss; he is under the power of the most tur-

bulent of passions. II. It does away with our merits. What benefit shall I draw from my actions if I have performed them through pride? One may labor much and nevertheless be accounted an unprofitable servant. The proud may undergo the hardships of an apostolic life but, notwithstanding, their lot will be that of the demons. III. Pride destroys all the virtues: faith, for it rests upon humility—God conceals Himself from the proud and reveals Himself to the little ones; charity, for the proud man loves none but himself. Chastity has no more formidable enemy than pride. IV. It brings down punishments upon us. God resists the proud man who becomes his own tormentor because of his extreme susceptibility. He who exalteth himself shall be humbled, both during this life and in eternity. This vice is an evident sign of reprobation.

MEDITATION XLIII.

PRIDE. (Continued.)

1.—*How Much we are Exposed to the Vice of Pride.*
2.—*In what Manner we should Strive against It.*

Same preludes.

First Point.— How much we are exposed to the vice of pride.

I. This is one of the sins in which we were conceived. "In sins did my mother conceive me." (Ps. l.) The newly born child has within himself the germ of this vice, and it is on this account not only common, but universal. The earthly Adam is already dead in him who does not experience the temptations of pride.

II. No other vice can disguise itself so well as pride, and clothe itself so successfully in the garb of virtue. In order to discover whether or not you are under its influence, reflect seriously upon the motives of your actions. You remain calm, master of yourself, when no one disregards you. This does not prove that you are humble. To remain silent and calm in the midst of outrages is not even a true mark of humility. If, indeed, you bear with the insult because you think it dangerous to defend yourself, if you remain silent through contempt for the offender, your calmness is nothing but the prudence of pride, your silence a mere calculation of self-love.

III. This passion finds its food on all sides, and is often strengthened by the very thing which will weaken another passion. Mortification overcomes voluptuousness, works of benevolence destroy

cupidity, and well-regulated work triumphs over sloth; but all this, if we are not careful, may become an incentive to pride. Pride knows how to turn its very defeats to its own advantage. When you have conquered its own suggestions it will be apt to come and whisper words of congratulation in your ears, and thus perhaps deprive you of the fruit of your victory.

IV. Pride attacks preferably what is most elevated in the order of grace and of sanctity. In its first attempt it hurled the angels from heaven. The richer you are in spiritual gifts, the more will it endeavor to despoil you. If you are progressing in virtue, says St. Eucherius, be on your guard against vanity, on that very account. The saints find it near them everywhere; in their solitudes, in their meditations, in their fastings, and in the very exhortations they use in order to impede its spread.

V. As regards priests, the temptation of pride is one of constant occurrence. Their sublime dignity, their extensive powers, the functions so honorable they perform, the veneration they enjoy, everything in their surroundings favors the seduction of self-love. Pride, says St. Bernard, has ruined more evangelical laborers than all the other vices taken together.

What has not Our Saviour done in order to guard them against this vice? After washing their feet, he says to them that the disciple or servant is not greater than his Master; that the Son of man, their sovereign Lord, is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister to. He forbids them to imitate the Pharisees, who loved the first seats and titles of honor. "But be not you called Rabbi." (Matt. xxiii. 8.) The disciples return from their mission, pleased with themselves, full of joy, and relate to Him the great things they had done: "Lord, the devils also are subject to us in Thy name." He endeavors to guard them against the poison of vainglory: "Rejoice not in this," and lest this admonition would not suffice, He uses the most energetic expressions and striking images: "I saw Satan like lightning falling from heaven." "O my disciples, you speak to me of your success, and your perils cause me to tremble." What a lesson! They question Him seeking to know which will have the first place in His kingdom, and he pronounces this oracle according to which every proud man must either become humble, or expose himself to spiritual ruin: "If any man desires to be first, he shall be the last of all and the minister of all." (Marc. ix. 34.) He does more still, and in order to give them a striking idea of that simplicity which is the foundation of Christian greatness, He calls a child to His presence, places him in the midst of them, and says to them, "Amen I say to you, unless you become as little children, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Second Point.—In what manner we should struggle against pride. Darkness is dispelled by light, and falsehood by truth. Pride is a deceitful image of greatness. Everything in this vice is false. Let truth reign over our thoughts and affections, and vanity shall have no hold upon us.

We shall become humble, says St. Augustine, *ex intuitu conditoris nostri et conditionis nostrae.* When we shall have known the infinite excellence of God, and the misery of our condition, justice will compel us to render honor to whom honor is due, and to despise whatever deserves naught but contempt; we will then say like David, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory." (Ps. cxiii. 9.)

Let us consider the divine perfection: *Noverim te.* Let us also consider our own nothingness: *Noverim me.* Our body and its infirmities, its near dissolution in the grave; our intelligence and its darkness; our imagination with its wild ravings; our will with its inclinations and weaknesses. Let us search our conscience. If it reproaches us with the commission were it of but one mortal sin in our whole life, will not this suffice to confound our pride? What did I do when I committed a grievous sin? I put myself below the most vile of all beings. Banished from heaven, condemned to eternal shame and torments, rebellious and treacherous to the adorable Master, whom I had sworn to serve, and ungrateful and cruel toward the best of fathers, the murderer of Jesus Christ whom I crucified in my heart. . . ah, how much I should deserve to be despised for one mortal transgression alone! What if I have repeatedly committed crime? Supposing, however, that I never sinned mortally, that I still enjoy in the sight of God all the beauty of my first innocence, well, how much time would it take to commit a mortal sin, to deserve the sentence of the reprobate and the eternal torments of the wicked? For this one moment is enough. Can I then be proud if I reflect upon this?

Another remedy against pride is found in meditating upon the insults and humiliations suffered by Our Lord Jesus Christ. They teach us first how justly we deserve to be despised, and secondly make us consider humiliations as favors granted us by almighty God in order to make us like unto His well-beloved Son; and we may in this manner acquire true humility, the humility of the heart. "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." (Matt.xi.29.)

Finally, the best remedy against pride would be fully to understand its great folly. We see within ourselves miseries which bring us down beneath the level of nothingness itself (for in nothingness there is no sin), and yet we are puffed up with pride! Is not this enough to make us humble?

We can not, however, of ourselves overcome this criminal insanity. To believe this would be presumption. *Remedium nullum potest esse contra, vanam gloriam, nisi sola oratio.* (St. Joan. Chrys.) I will therefore often and fervently recite this prayer of the Church: *Deus, qui superbis resistis, et gratiam praestas humilibus, concede nobis verae humilitatis virtutem, . . . ut nunquam indignationem tuam provocemus elati, sed potius gratiae tuae capiamus dona subjecti.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—We are much exposed to pride. The germ of it is within us at our birth. No other vice can disguise itself so well. It finds its nourishment everywhere. The very things which weaken other passions, it may turn to its advantage. It attacks preferably those who are more elevated in the order of grace and of sanctity. What did not Our Saviour do, to guard His disciples and apostles against this vice?

Second Point.—In what manner we should strive against pride. Falsehood surrounds this vice on all sides. To this vice we should oppose truth. Let truth possess our thoughts and affections, and vanity will be excluded from them. Let us know God, let us know ourselves, and we shall render honor to God and keep contempt for ourselves. Let us consider our body; what it is, what it will soon be; our intelligence and its darkness, our imagination with its ravings, our will with its disorderly inclinations! Search your conscience, remember your falls, the dangers you are exposed to. Meditate upon the outrages suffered by Our Saviour. Think of the folly of pride. Above all things, pray.

MEDITATION XLIV.

COVETOUSNESS. ITS OPPOSITION TO THE STATE OF THE PRIESTHOOD.

1.—*Covetousness is Opposed to the Dignity of the Priest.*
2.—*To the End of his Mission.*

First Point.—Covetousness opposed to the dignity of the priesthood. No man, no Christian, but especially no priest, can, without debasing himself, set his affections upon material, perishable goods. A certain pagan who despised sensual objects has said: *Major sum et ad majora natus.* Every Christian should say with regard to the things of this world: *Quam sordet tellus, dum coelum intueor!* What then shall be the thoughts of the priest, if he be in any degree conscious of his greatness, and mindful of his dignity?

The priest is elevated above the monarchs of the earth, as much as the soul is superior to the body; he belongs to heaven by the sublimity of his functions; walks amongst men, as it were, the equal of angels, and has received honors more extensive than those heavenly spirits. Let us remember the divine functions he is called to perform, viz.: to reconcile the Creator with the creature; to battle against the power of hell; to destroy sin; to establish the reign of virtue, of grace and peace. Will such a man debase himself to such a degree as to set his affections upon vain riches which God gives over to His enemies, and which He has branded with His maledictions? Will he give his attention and time to the acquisition of money, as a thing of much consequence? O shame, O profanation of the priesthood! *Ignominia sacerdotis est propriis studere divitiis.* (St. Jer.) "Thou, O man of God, fly these things, and pursue justice, godliness." (1 Tim. vi. 11.) Your love for money, your desire to become wealthy, would be less inexcusable were you not the representative of Him who had not on earth whereon to lay His head, and established holy poverty as the foundation of His moral doctrine; but since you have the honor of being His minister, oh, avoid that greed which establishes a contrast so revolting between you and the God of Bethlehem, Nazareth, and Calvary. Pursue justice and godliness; love God; make Him beloved by others; prepare to possess Him in eternity; behold an ambition worthy of you; behold the rich reward promised to your efforts; leave to the hireling that filthy lucre as a meet recompense of his servile labors.

Second Point.—Opposition of covetousness to the object of our mission. To glorify God, to adore Him and make Him be adored, and to save immortal souls, such are the object of the priesthood of Jesus Christ. How does the covetous priest fulfil these obligations?

I. He does not glorify God, but he outrages Him. Under the Old Law the priests had no share in the land given to the children of Israel. This exclusion was for them a glorious privilege. They enjoyed a blessing fully capable of satisfying all their desires, a blessing far above all the vain riches of this world. "I am thy portion and inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel." The Levitical priesthood was magnificently endowed, but what shall we say of the inheritance bestowed upon us, priests of the New Testament? Is not God our portion in a more perfect manner than He was of the children of Aaron? This inheritance we accepted with joy when we entered the clerical state. *Dominus pars haereditatis meae.* We promised to be content with this portion, and who could refuse to content himself with such portion?

Dominus pars haereditatis meae. This, however, is the insult offered to God by the covetous priest. Thy glory, O Lord, shall fill the desires of Thy elect throughout eternity, but Thou canst not fill the desires of the covetous priest on earth. In the distribution of Thy goods Thou hast given the earth to the children of men; Thou hast given Thyself to Thy ministers. *Ego ero pars et haereditas tua;* and now behold one of those privileged ones who complains of his lot, who envies that of the *children of men.* O supreme Good, O Thou the plenitude of all goods, must Thou be so cruelly outraged by Thy priests after they have been so highly honored by Thee?

II. Another object of the priesthood is to uphold, to propagate religion, and to us has been entrusted the care of attending to the worship of God. But is there any spirit of religion in the priest who is covetous? What sort of worship does he offer almighty God? Does he worship Him by faith? He seems not to believe in the providence, power, and goodness of God, nor in His fidelity to His promises. The passion for riches has led many astray in the matter of doctrine. (1 Tim. vi. 10.) *Vides, quia qui pecuniam appetit, fidem perdit.* (St. Am. de Avar.) Does he worship God by hope? The priest whose heart is set on money puts more dependence upon his gold than upon God. "Behold the man that made not God his helper, but trusted in the abundance of his riches." (Ps. li. 9.) Does he worship Him by love? Where the treasure is, there is the heart. *Putant plus valere nummum, quam Deum.* (St. Aug.) *Frui volunt nummo, uti autem Deo.* (Idem.)

Religion, of which we have been made the custodians, has no greater enemy than idolatry. It is disfigured by superstition; it is mocked by licentiousness; but by idolatry it is entirely destroyed. Now, St. Paul formally declares in two of his epistles that extravagant affection for the goods of the earth is a real idolatry. Long before St. Paul a prophet had said: "I have become rich, I have found me an idol." (Os. xii. 8.) And now behold the abomination: the temples of the true God become the temples of that idolatry, and its priests are the ministers of Jesus Christ himself. *Vae, vae, in domo Dei horrendum videmus. Quidni idolatras ministrantes? Mentior, si non idolorum servitus avaritia est; quod enim quisque prae coeteris colit id sibi Deum constituisse probatur.*

III. Opposition of covetousness to the spirit of zeal for the salvation of souls. To each of us it has been said as to the apostles: "Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. . . . Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils." (Matt. x.) For indeed those exterior wonders performed by the first priests of Jesus Christ prefigured the miracles of grace performed by our-

selves. But in order to qualify ourselves for this great mission, behold the recommendations addressed to us by Him who sent us: "Freely have you received, give freely. Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses." (Ib.) We know, indeed, that all the apostolical men who have most successfully accomplished their mission were remarkable for their entire detachment from the things of earth. These are they who can sympathize with others in their trials and dangers.

As to the priest who is fond of money, you need not speak to him of compassion toward others; he has no thought, no feeling but for his money. What does he care about the welfare of the flock? "He is a hireling, and has no care for the sheep." (Joan. x. 13.) He is not in the least concerned if he gains not a single soul to God during his whole life, nor if his spiritual children are miserably lost; but if any of his rights are contested, if there is a fall in his perquisites, he becomes sad, he complains, he goes into fits of anger, he has been wounded to the quick. Though he should exercise his functions with some appearance of zeal, he need not expect any good results therefrom; the mere suspicion of covetousness would tarnish the beauty of his virtues; no one believes in the reality of his zeal once he is discovered to be the slave of covetousness.

I understand, O my Jesus, the evil and sad consequences of cupidity in the hearts of Thy ministers. It outrages Thee, and would suffice to ruin the designs of mercy which Thou hadst in instituting the priesthood. Banish from Thy sanctuary a leprosy so shameful, so much opposed to Thy spirit. Since Thou designest Thyself to be my possession and my riches, Thou who art the only source of all riches; since Thou givest Thyself to me every day at the altar as the portion of my inheritance, I will have naught but Thee, O my God; Thyself and Thy cross, together with the happiness of loving Thee and the pleasure of gaining souls for Thee. *Quasi sacerdos et levita, nudus nudam crucem sequar.* (St. Hier. and Nep.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Opposition of covetousness to the dignity of the priesthood. A pagan said, relating to objects which flatter the senses: *Major sum et ad majora natus.* A Christian, but particularly the priest, should say: *Quam sordet tellus, dum coelum intueor!* The priest is the *homo Dei.* His duty is to make known to the world the God of the stable and of Calvary. What a profanation for such a man to set his heart upon money!

Second Point.—Covetousness opposed to the end of our mis-

sion. The covetous priest outrages God in place of glorifying Him. The Lord is a portion of his inheritance, and he is not content with it! A covetous priest dishonors religion of which he is the minister. No two things are more directly opposed to each other than cupidity and zeal for the salvation of souls. Of him it has been said: *Mercenarius est; non pertinet ad eum de ovibus.*

MEDITATION XLV.

COVETOUSNESS IN A PRIEST. ITS EFFECTS. EXAMPLE OF JUDAS.

1.—*This Passion Blinds Us.*

2.—*It Hardens the Heart and Leads to the Greatest Crimes.*

3.—*It Leads to Final Impenitence.*

First Point.—Covetousness blinds us. This blindness is indeed the first effect of every passion, but it is more frightful in the covetous man. Who could know so well as Judas the nothingness of riches, the excellence of voluntary poverty? He had heard the divine teachings of Jesus Christ concerning detachment from things of earth, the anathemas He had pronounced against the rich, the pressing recommendations He had addressed the other apostles and himself when He sent them to preach the Gospel. He had experienced like the others to what extent heaven blesses the ministry of the poor. At the very time that He gives way to his passion, by murmuring against Magdalen, he hears his Master praise the pious prodigality of this woman, and declare that what she has done shall be told to her honor through the whole world.

The example of the Saviour, however, should have convinced him more effectually than anything else. He believed in His divinity, for he had seen so many evidences of it. He could not but believe that everything that He condemned deserved contempt, and everything He praised deserved esteem. Now, he had under his eye the Lord of the Universe, who possessed and would possess no earthly treasures. In the midst of so much light, Judas does not see, nay more, he is so far blinded by his love of money that he forgets the best interests of his passion; for, as he knew the deadly hatred of the enemies of Jesus, he might have turned this knowledge to his advantage, and asked a very high price for his betrayal, as they were prepared to accede to his demand. This, however, he does not do; he is satisfied with their offer. *Quid vultis mihi dare?* He takes the thirty pieces of silver, though shortly before he expressed regret for having lost three hundred

pence. "This ointment might have been sold for more than three hundred pence and given to the poor."

O madness, O monstrous blindness! St. John Chrysostom exclaims. But is it less inexplicable to-day in the heirs of the priesthood of Jesus Christ? Do not the priests preach the same Gospel which condemns so severely the love of the goods of the earth, which commands so expressly not to be solicitous as the pagans were. "After all these things do the heathens seek." (Matt. vi. 32.) Have they not, like Judas, the same examples of the Saviour, and, moreover, the terrible lesson which Judas himself has given them?

Ah! how much havoc has love for money wrought in the sanctuary since the origin of the Church? Is it free from it in our day? There are so many kinds of covetousness; hence, says Bossuet, Jesus Christ does not say, Beware of covetousness, but "beware of all covetousness." (Luke xii. 15.) It knows how to hide itself under very specious pretexts. If something is put by, it is in view of future projects. It is intended to found or to sustain some good work. So much would be done if one had the means. In the meantime the poor are allowed to suffer. Scandal is given and life passes away without good works.

St. Bernard, commenting upon the well-known text, "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content." (1 Tim. vi. 8), asks: "Where are the priests who are content with the strictly necessary and care not for the superfluous?" This rule of the apostles we find written in books, but who practises it? Yet it is written of the just, that the law of God it in his heart. All agree with St. Paul that he is to be excluded from the pastoral ministry who seeks for "sordid gain." What priest deserves to be so stigmatized? He, says St. Jerome, who is too much concerned about things present, and over-solicitous for the future, who disregards divine providence. Let us beware of a passion which made an apostate of an apostle at the school and under the eyes of Jesus Christ, and which fills the mind with the densest darkness.

Second Point.—Love of money hardens the heart of the priest and makes him capable of committing the greatest crimes. As soon as Judas allows himself to be overcome by covetousness, he has no feeling for anything else save for money. The efforts of Our Saviour to frighten him, and to move his heart, are useless. When He speaks of His approaching death, of the treason of one of His disciples, all are filled with sadness; Judas alone remains impassive. When he humbles himself so far as to wash their feet, Peter could not consent to it, and exclaimed: "Dost

Thou wash my feet?" Judas, however is not concerned and presents his feet to be washed. He is witness of miracles in the Garden of Olives; armed men fall to the ground at the sound of a word; the ear of Malchus is healed instantaneously; he sees the ineffable meekness of the Saviour, who bows down His head to receive the treacherous kiss, and who at that very moment calls him His friend. In order to convert him Our Saviour uses every means: admonitions, reproaches, threats, tears, caresses, tender insinuations, but he feels nothing; all is in vain, his hardened soul resists every effort, and his cupidity leads him to commit the darkest and most sacrilegious of all crimes. "What will you give me, and I will deliver Him unto you?": thus Judas. A God becomes the victim of covetousness! The Creator of the world is offered for sale, for there was here a real bargain—Jesus, on the one hand, was, if we dare use the expression, the merchandise offered for sale; the price, thirty pieces of silver; Judas, the merchant; the princes of the people, the buyers. A God sold! The unworthy communion which preceded, and the despair which followed it complete the list of those horrors.

You should tremble, O Priest, if you discover in yourself the least germ of this detestable passion. Unless you root it out of your heart, the Church can expect no good of you, and there is no sin that you will not be liable to commit. "The desire of money is the root of all evil." (1. Tim. vi. 10.) It will extinguish in you every honorable sentiment. Neither charity, religion, humanity, nor even propriety and the respect which you owe to your own state, will be able to stop you. The functions of the ministry, nay, the deposit of faith, everything will be sacrificed to the love of money. "Teaching the things they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." (Tit. i. 11.) God grant that you may not go so far as to ascend the altar in order to give up to the devil the same body and blood of Jesus Christ which Judas delivered to the Jews after his unworthy communion in the cenacle. "Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man. There is not a more wicked thing than to love money; for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale." Innocent III. says of the covetous man: *Offendit Deum, offendit proximum, offendit seipsum. Nam Deo retinet debita, proximo denegat necessaria, sibi subtrahit opportuna: Deo ingratus, proximo impius, sibi crudelis.* (De vilitat. cond. hum.)

Third Point.—Love of money leads to final impenitence. It can not be denied that a particular malediction is attached to this vile inclination. "They that will become rich," says St. Paul, "fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men into

destruction and perdition." (1. Tim. vi. 9.) St. Bernard affirms that there will be no inheritance in heaven for the priest who desires to have his inheritance on earth. Oh, how difficult it is for the covetous priest to bring back sincerely to God the heart which he had set upon money! Age, which weakens the other passions, strengthens that of covetousness. Let us take a lesson from Judas. The rocks of Calvary are rent, but his heart remains hard. Not to say that this priest gave no sign of return to better sentiments; he even gives the very signs which inspire most confidence in the true conversion of sinners. He repents: *poenitentia ductus;* he avows his crime: *Peccavi, tradens sanguinem justum;* he repairs it, it seems, as much as he can: *Retulit triginta argenteos principibus sacerdotum* (Matt. xxvii. 3. 4); and with all that he dies impenitent.

Love to give alms: how rich is the treasure you will amass in this way! Beware of those savings laid by for an uncertain future. They are snares of the enemy of our salvation. *Ne forte, cum servas unde vivas, colligas unde moriaris.* (St. Aug.) But since the temptation of having our share in the goods of this world is so common and so dangerous, ask for grace never to yield to it. As a preparation for Mass humble yourself in the presence of Our Lord, seeing you have had in this matter sentiments so much opposed to His. "Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness." (Ps. cxviii. 36.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Love of money blinds men. Who could have known so well as Judas the nothingness of riches, the excellence of poverty? He had heard the teachings of Christ; he had had His examples under his eyes—yet he says, *Quid vultis mihi dare?* Is cupidity entirely banished from the sanctuary? The Saviour does not say: *Cavete ab avaritia,* but *Ab omni avaritia.* Covetousness hides itself under very specious pretexts.

Second Point.—The love of money hardens the heart and makes a man capable of committing every sin. From the moment that Judas gave his heart to it he had no feeling for anything else. He sees miracles performed; he experiences in his own person a new evidence of the meekness of his Master; nothing touches, nothing stops him. *Radix omnium malorum. Avaro nihil scelestius.*

Third Point.—Love of money leads to final impenitence. "They that will become rich," says St. Paul, "fall into temptation and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which drown men into destruction and perdition." Let us take a lesson from Judas. The rocks of Calvary are rent, and

his heart remains hard. He repents, confesses his crime, throws the price of it at the feet of the princes of the priests, and with all that he dies impenitent.

MEDITATION XLVI.

ENVY IN PRIESTS.

1.—*This Vice is Detestable.*
2.—*It is Injurious.*
3.—*It is Very Common.*

First Point.—The vice of envy is detestable. There is in the vice of envy a low and foolish wickedness which is not to be found in other passions. These can adduce some pretexts; they propose to themselves some object at least apparently good; the ambitious man longs for honors, the avaricious for wealth, and the voluptuous man for luxury. Now, all these passions are sins only because of our disorderly will which seeks for them. Envy alone offers no advantage, not even an apparent one; everything about it brings shame, sorrow, perversity. The priest who has a noble heart, a solid judgment, but particularly a little charity, would wish all men to be happy; he sympathizes with the unfortunate; he is pleased when he hears that the work of God prospers in the hands of his companions in the ministry. When he hears that crowds assemble to listen to his instructions, or gather around his confessional, he says with St. Paul: "So that by all means, whether by occasion or by truth, Christ be preached. in this also I rejoice, yea and will rejoice." (Ph. i. 18.) What a step from the noble sentiments of St. Paul to the selfishness of the envious! The priest who is envious feels sad at the joy and successes of other evangelical laborers; he finds a cause of vexation and pain in the good which they perform, and in the praises which they receive.

The disciples of John the Baptist come to him and say: "Rabbi, He . . . to whom thou gavest testimony, behold He baptizeth, and all men come to Him." (Joan. iii. 26.) The Pharisees complain because the "whole world went after Jesus Christ." (Joan. xii. 9.) Is not this the language or at least the feeling of envious priests? "All the world goes to him; all the favors, all the praises are for him alone." They can not bear to be thrown in the shade. Behold an inconceivable excess of this vice. There appears in the world an extraordinary prophet, as holy in his life as he is admirable on account of his learning and talents. Immense success would follow his labors, if some other prophets, his fellow laborers,

did not set themselves openly against him. What meanness! Let us say rather, what pride, what perversity!

"The whole world goes to him." What harm do you see in it? Do they say that he is a false prophet? that his doctrine is dangerous? that his direction is such as to lead souls astray? No, quite the contrary; they say that he is a saint; that he preaches admirably; brings about countless conversions; that God blesses everything that he undertakes. You are a priest and you feel sad on this account! You would be better pleased if this brother priest did less good, procured less glory to God, fewer consolations to the Church, and snatched from hell a smaller number of souls! Do you not know that there is in this, according to St. Thomas, a sin against the Holy Ghost? You do, as it were, begrudge the Holy Ghost the gifts which He loves to bestow, and the works which mostly contribute to glorify Him amongst men. St. John Chrysostom reckons the slaves of this passion to be worse than the devils themselves: for, whilst they are bent on pursuing men, they spare the other devils, their companions; but the envious man fights his fellow beings, and the very persons he is mostly bound to love. *Invidus ipso diabolo magis diabolus est; invidet Satan, sed hominibus, non sociis; tu vero, homo cum sis, invides hominibus* (In Joan Hom. 45.)

Being as silly as he is guilty, he effects quite the opposite of what he intends; he exalts those whom he would lower, and imparts greater luster to the reputation he intends to blacken. The envy which he shows is an avowal of his own inferiority. *Malitia invidentium eos quibus invidet clariores facit.* (St. Chrys.) Pilate would have been less favorable to Jesus Christ had he not discovered that His greatest crime was to have more merit than His accusers. "He knew that for envy they had delivered Him." (Matt. xxvii. 18.) Unconsciously the envious man becomes an object of contempt for those who know him. The world understands that none except a narrow-minded and bad-hearted man can become the slave of so shameful and perverse a passion.

Second Point.—This vice is injurious. Let us open the sacred record. *Abelem occidit invidia, fratres Joseph armavit, Danielem in lacum leonum misit, Caput nostrum cruci affixit.* (St. Aug.) Envy was the cause of the greater part of schisms and heresies. Simon envies the apostles the power of communicating the Holy Ghost. Tertullian could not bear that another should be preferred to him for the episcopal office. Novatian was not raised to the See of St. Peter as he had expected. Luther was not chosen to preach the indulgences. What followed from it? Long before these sad triumphs of envy it had changed angels into

demons. *Quale malum est quo Angelus cecidit!* (1. Cypr.) It had introduced death into the world by introducing sin therein. "By the envy of the devil death came into the world." (Wisd. ii. 24.) How often has the Church wept over the sad effects of envy, which divided ministers who were bound to sustain one another, and who actually at times reviled one another to the great scandal of souls and the profit of hell!

Who will tell what crimes and misfortunes have resulted from the envy of jealous confessors domineering over consciences? Their penitents know that they will displease them if they address themselves to another confessor. "Oh," says St. Thomas, "how much harm can the spirit of darkness do if confession is not free!" Why has the Council of Trent prescribed that extraordinary confessors should be given religious communities several times in the year? "It is," says St. Francis de Sales, "to obviate the loss of thousands of souls which might result from subjection to one confessor." Consult these two authorities and you will be convinced that the confessor who will enjoy alone the confidence of his penitents takes upon himself an awful responsibility. He becomes the cause of many sacrileges, and the murderer of his spiritual children.

Third Point.—This vice is very common. You will be little surprised to discover the germ of it in so many hearts if you remember that pride is the most universal of all passions; that the elder daughter of pride is vain-glory, which is itself the mother of envy. We discover it among the apostles when they were still imperfect. "There was a strife amongst them, which of them should seem to be the greater." (Luc. xxii. 24.) Nay, after the descent of the Holy Ghost upon this earthly clergy, so pure and so fervent, Paul finds the envious amongst them. "Some out of envy and contention . . . preach Christ not sincerely, supposing that they raise affliction to my bonds." (Phil. i. 15–18.)

What cruelty and fury, says St. John Chrysostom, because the Apostle has acquired some reputation. Some vain, envious spirits there are who will take no comfort on that account. For them is was not enough that Paul was persecuted, afflicted, loaded with chains; their desire was to increase his sufferings. Need we wonder that this vile passion has found its way into our midst, when it appeared at a time in which martyrdom was the ordinary reward of the sacerdotal ministry? In place of rejoicing at the advantages of our fellow priests we perhaps feel secretly displeased when we hear them mentioned; we seek to lower the high esteem the people have for their talents; to question their successes, and to say they are due rather to imagination and prejudice than to real merit. Under the pretext of zeal we throw suspicion on the

zeal of others, imputing to them imprudence, excess of severity, or laxity. Whilst blaming jealous confessors, we remain under the influence of the same vice of envy, and in the very moment of telling penitents that they are free, their liberty is on the contrary restrained by showing how sad they would be if they made use of their freedom.

Let us consider God in His gifts; we will then love them in others as well as in ourselves. This would be an excellent means of appropriating to ourselves gifts which are not our own, and of participating in the merits and virtues of our brethren. *Congaude alicui, cui Deus aliquam gratiam donavit, tua est; habit ille virginitatem, ama illam in illo, tua est.* (St. Aug.) The same holy Doctor gives us another counsel. *Invidia est filia superbiae . . . suffoca matrem et non erit filia.*

Since we are about to receive the God of all charity and humility, let us beseech Him to preserve our souls from a passion so unworthy of a priest, so that, being united in the same spirit of peace and with the sole desire of His glory, we may together in charity labor at the great work committed to us, which is the salvation of our brethren.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The vice of envy is detestable. There is in the vice of envy a low and foolish malice which can not even disguise itself under a single solid pretext. We ought to rejoice at the success and happiness of others; the envious become sad on this very account. What? Would you prefer that your brother priest would do less good; would procure less glory to God; would snatch away fewer souls from hell? The slave of this passion, says St. John Chrysostom, is worse than the devil, for he does not wage war against his own. Being as silly as he is guilty he exalts those whom he would wish to lower; adds more luster to the reputation he would like to darken; in seeking for esteem he finds contempt.

Second Point.—This vice is pernicious. St. Augustine demonstrates it in these words: *Abelem occidit invidia, fratres Joseph armavit, Danielem in lacum leonum misit, Caput nostrum cruci affixit.* Envy gave rise to the greater number of schisms and of heresies. It changed angels into devils. It caused the Church to shed bitter tears. What crimes and misfortunes it occasions when it enters the soul of confessors!

Third Point.—The vice of envy is very common. We see it appear amongst the apostles themselves. *Facta est contentio, inter eos, quis eorum videretur esse major.* Nay, after the descent of the Holy Ghost amongst that early priesthood, so pure and so

fervent, Paul found some envious persons. St. Augustine gives us an excellent remedy against envy: *Invidia est filia superbiae; . . . suffoca matrem et non erit filia.*

MEDITATION XLVII.

TEMPTATIONS OF INTEMPERANCE.

1.—*They are Frequent.*

2.—*Why the Devil Employs them so Often against Priests.*

3.—*In what Manner they should Resist them.*

First Point.—Temptations of intemperance are very frequent. This is a continual subject of complaint to souls who wish to give themselves entirely to God. They would wish to forego the necessities which occasion them, and say with the pious author of the "Following of Christ," *Utinam non essent istae necessitates, sed solummodo spirituales animae refectiones, quas, heu! satis raro degustamus!* (Im. 1, 25.)

Our enemy used this temptation with so much success against Adam in the terrestrial paradise that he thought of using it again against the second Adam in the desert. With it, also, he attacks the most exalted souls, and makes us commit countless venial sins. St. Paul recommended sobriety, *sobrius esto*, to the same disciple whose excessive abstemiousness he had blamed in another epistle. Some persons who are habitually mortified rarely come out of certain occasions without regrets for transgressing the laws of temperance.

In this manner one may sin in five ways, according to St. Thomas: *praepropere, laute, nimis, ardenter, studiose.* Let us consider each of these words, and let us not forget that this passion may be indulged even in the use of the most common nutriments. Of this we have an evidence in Esau. To what did that dish of food amount to for which he gave up his birthright? When the devil tempted Our Lord he did not offer Him rich viands, but common bread.

Second Point.—Why the spirit of darkness employs this temptation so often against priests? To this question we will answer by examining the effects of intemperance. They are the following, according to St. Gregory: *inepta laetitia, scurrilitas, immunditia, multiloquium, et hebetudo mentis.* If all this be found in a priest, can you imagine a condition more favorable to the designs of hell? What is better calculated to throw discredit on the priesthood, and to transform the minister of God into an auxiliary of Satan.

Compare these effects with the end of our ministry. The priest is a public penitent, who should pray between the porch and the altar, solicit forgiveness for sinners whilst he calls upon them to repent. He is the ambassador of the King of kings, the representative of God; no one is so much as he obliged to observe the laws of propriety and of respect for his dignity. He is the angel of earth, in duty bound to restore and to preserve purity in the souls of men. How great, therefore, should not be the purity of his life? His mouth is the mouthpiece of Jesus Christ, and receives every day the Sacrament of His body and of His blood. None but divine words should come forth from his lips. As a dispenser of the mysteries of God he should occupy his mind in the contemplation of divine truths, enlighten himself with the sun of uncreated wisdom in order to be qualified afterward to enlighten his brethren.

What does the intemperate priest do? Do his foolish and dissolute pleasures prepare him to appease the anger of God, and to excite compunction in souls? *Inepta laetitia.* Can one expect to find edifying gravity in a clerical buffoon? *Scurrilitas.* Will he who has no respect for chastity be able to purify the hearts of others? *Immunditia.* Does not high living lead to luxury? *Semper saturitati juncta est lascivia.* How many indiscretions and scandals are not to be found in that *multiloquium* of the intemperate priest? Finally, how will he be capable of guiding souls into spiritual life who has made himself unable to use his mental faculties? *Hebetudo mentis.* It is therefore evident that nothing so well promotes the designs of Satan as the intemperance of priests.

Third Point.—In what manner should we fight the temptations of intemperance. I. In our warfare against our vices, and principally against this one, we are above all things recommended to watch continually. *Vigilate.* The senses had full control over us during the first portion of our lives; for infants yield to them in almost everything. Now, these senses are not slow to reassert their control over us. The sensual man allows himself to be carried away by the pleasure of eating, indulges greedily in the use of such food as flatters his tastes, but the mortified man restrains himself and pauses before taking his refection. He goes to the table as a warrior to the combat, and begins his meals by a victory gained over greediness. He thus blunts the edge of sensual gratification, and takes time to offer it to almighty God, and in this way to sanctify an action which so easily leads to the commission of sin.

II. Let the conscience determine what is necessary and what is sufficient; let it trace the limits within which we should remain,

in order not to injure the health of the body nor the welfare of the soul. At a time when our mind will be free, when we will not be disturbed by the desire of eating or drinking, let us endeavor to find that just measure which will conciliate all interests. Let us consult experience concerning the good or bad effects resulting from the use of such nutriments taken in such quantities . . . concerning the use of such or such drinks. Let us hearken to the accusation of the body which declares that it has been incommoded. Let us listen to the soul which may have more serious reproaches to make: heaviness of mind, inaptitude to prayer, shameful temptations, perhaps deplorable falls. After a full discussion of all these points let our conscience pronounce; but its sentence should be respected as the voice of God Himself; and for the future, in presence of temptations of intemperance, let us not change what had been regulated in the combined counsels of faith and reason.

III. At the very moment of temptation oppose to the gratification which it promises the joy you will experience in having overcome it and also the regret and other consequences following sensuality. In order to appreciate the importance of this strife let us remember that there is question not only of the act of this present moment (of the morsel to be eaten, of the glass to be taken), but of a countless number of the acts of the same kind over which it shall have an influence. If I yield now, later on I shall have less energy to resist; on the contrary, if I come off victorious, this victory will facilitate a great number of others. From a passing act of abstemiousness or of sensuality may depend a long series of good or evil actions, the liberty or servitude of my soul.

As the practice of abstemiousness must be of daily occurrence, it will be for me an excellent means to acquit myself of my spiritual debts and of multiplynig my merits. I shall also find therein the source of the most chaste delights. "If for the love of Jesus Christ you deprive yourself in your food of all that is taken for pleasure without advantage to health, be convinced that He Himself will prepare for you the sweetness of His consolations, and that you will find pleasing to your taste the victuals you will be content with in order to please Him." (St. Vinc. Ferr.) Let us consider the table as an altar, and never rise from it without having offered to God some sacrifice.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point. — Nothing more frequent than the temptations to intemperance. Our enemy having used this weapon with so much success against the first man, it was also the first

temptation he used against Our Lord Jesus Christ in the desert. St. Paul recommends sobriety to the same disciple whom he had censured for excessive abstemiousness. Even priests who are usually mortified have sometimes to look back on certain occasions with regret for having trespassed the laws of temperance. In this matter we may sin in five different ways, *Praepropere, laute, nimis, ardenter, studiose*, and, moreover, this vice may introduce itself even in the use of the most common victuals.

Second Point.—Why the spirit of darkness so often employs this temptation against priests! We will understand it if we reflect on the consequences of intemperance. *Inepta laetitia, scurrilitas, immunditia, multiloquim, et hebetudo mentis.* Compare those effects with the end of the sacerdotal ministry, and you will be convinced that nothing does so well answer the designs of the devil as intemperance in priests.

Third Point.—In what manner we should strive against it. I. Above all, continual vigilance, in order to avoid surprise. Go to the table as a soldier to the fight, and begin all your meals by a victory over sensuality. II. Examine beforehand what is necessary and what is sufficient, in order not to injure the health of the body nor that of the soul. III. At the moment of temptation compare the gratification you expect from it with the joy you will experience in having overcome it. Consider the table as an altar, and do not leave it without offering some sacrifice.

MEDITATION XLVIII.

ON LOSS OF TIME.

1.—*The Sin which it Comprises.*
2.—*The Sins which it Occasions.*

First Point.—Loss of time in a priest is a great crime. Because time is in itself very precious; because that of the priest is much more so.

I. The value of time is measured by the price which it cost and the blessings which it may provide.

Let us ask of Calvary what is the value of those days or hours for the loss of which so many persons have no regret. Time is not only a grace,—it is the first, the most important of graces; it is the foundation upon which all the graces repose. Now, if each grace represents a humiliation, a suffering, a drop of the blood of Jesus Christ, how much should we not prize time, every portion of which brings us a new grace. I believe it, O my God—this very mo-

ment of my life which Thou grantest me in Thy mercy is the price of Thy blood. *Pretium sanguinis est.* Were it but the price of Thy tears, surely the tears of a God are not of small value! David refuses to quench his thirst with the water which his servants had procured by endangering their lives. This, he thought, would be to drink their blood. "Shall I drink the blood of those men that went, and at the peril of their lives?" (2 Kings xxiii. 17.) He pours it out to the glory of God. "He would not drink, but offered it to the Lord." (Ib.) And I, a priest, would not blush to spend in gratifying my pride and sensuality those precious moments of mercy which are the fruits of the bruises and death of Jesus Christ! O my Saviour, I will use them to better advantage; I will consecrate them all to Thy glory.

The glory of God and the salvation of men are the two invaluable results of well-spent time. The glory which God receives from us in time, is, in a certain respect, more acceptable to Him than the glory which He receives from His elect in eternity; and indeed I can on earth refuse to give Him the homage which I freely offer Him; I adhere to Him, notwithstanding thousands of temptations which solicit me to separate from Him. The liberty which I enjoy, the choice I make of Him for the God of my heart, add to my sacrifices an odor of sweetness which makes them more valuable in His eyes.

From the standpoint of salvation, time is a coin which is rightly appreciated only in heaven and in hell. The reprobate pays his debt in a place of torments; that debt he can never discharge, and on this account hell is eternal. This same frightful debt is hanging over me if I am in mortal sin. Happily it is in my power to discharge it, as long as I have time, be it ever so short; but should time be wanting, I become insolvent, and shall be cast into that prison of fire from which one never comes forth. . . Give me grace, O my God, to understand well that reprobation is naught but eternal despair occasioned by the eternal regret of having lost time. If, on the other hand, ascending in spirit to heaven, I ask each of the elect what was the cost of his crown, each will answer "Time, a short space of time holily spent." It is therefore true in a sense that time is worth God Himself; for if well spent, we exchange it for the possession of God. *Tempus tantum valet quantum Deus: quippe in tempore bene consumpto comparatur Deus.* (St. Bernard.) Think of time in connection with heaven and hell.

II. All we have said is true of time in general, but how much more precious yet is the time of the priest? God has claims on his ministers which he has not in the same degree on the laity; and these claims result from the consecration they have received and

from the obligations they have taken upon themselves. St. Jane de Chantal, being asked why she was so saving of her time, answered, "because it is not mine any longer; I have consecrated it all to the Lord; I can not lose a particle of it without injustice to Him, who is the Master of it." A priest can say the same, and with still more reason. We know the saying of the holy bishop of Geneva, "When I think on the use I have made of the time of God, I fear He may be unwilling to give me His eternity; for He will give it to those only who make a good use of time." And yet when shall we find a lifetime better spent than that of St. Francis de Sales? Ah, I am the priest who ought to tremble when I consider the use I have made of the time of God.

Moreover, the life of the priest is spent in occupations so excellent, of so extensive a character, that one moment of time which I use well can procure to God an infinite glory and immense advantages to my neighbor. Jesus Christ is always, through me, glorifying His Father; what merit does He not impart to my feeble homages? That quarter of an hour which I use in directing my intention and exciting myself to fervor before the holy sacrifice, then my thanksgiving after it, will, I can hope, give fecundity to the efforts of many evangelical laborers, prepare the success of my own ministry, obtain victory in the moment of temptation for some of the members of my flock, and perhaps the grace of salvation for a whole people to whom God sends the ministers of His word; and the same may be said of all my other occupations. I am always and everywhere the man of the Church, the universal mediator. The loss of time in a priest is a loss to all mankind.

Second Point.—Sins which the loss of time occasions. Follow up the effects of idleness in a pastor. If I lose my time unscrupulously I give myself up to every temptation, and all my life will be disordered. "Idleness has taught much evil." (Eccle. xxxiii. 29.) St. Bernard calls it: *Mater nugarum, noverca virtutum, omnium tentationum et cogitationum malarum sentina, summa mentis malitia.* But a wise occupation is the shield of the heart. *Clypeus cordis labor.* (St. Jer.) It costs the devil very little effort to draw into the most shameful excesses the man who is already enervated by indolence, whose soul is opened to all evil impressions. *Luxuria cito decipit hominem otiosum, hominem vagantem. Gravius urit quem otiosum invenit.* (St. Bern.) *David, Solomon, Samson, in occupationibus sancti, in otio perierunt.* (St. Aug.) *Tentant otia, quos bella non fregerant.* (St. Ambr.) The brook is pure as long as it runs rapidly over the brow of the hill; when it has reached the plain and remains stagnant its liquid water becomes livid and miry. What will you see if you dis-

turb its surface? *Illic reptilia quorum non est numerus.* Such is the heart of the man who slumbers in indolence.

What shall we say of the indolence of the priest in its consequence relative to his neighbor? Imagine the sun refusing to rise above the horizon, denying us the benefit of its light and heat; or suppose that the atmosphere should cease to be agitated by the wind, which purifies and renews the air; the calamities which would follow this fatal inaction in the physical world are an image of those which the inaction of the priest would produce in the moral world. The inaction of the sun would plunge the world into darkness and strike the earth with sterility. . . In the immobility of the atmosphere, the air would become a source of death; such also are the effects of idleness in the priesthood.

A priest who loses his time can not enlighten souls by solid instructions, nor inflame them with the fire of his zeal; such a priest has no zeal. If he were zealous, would he coldly permit the spiritual ruin of his brethren, for whom Our Saviour died on the cross? Would he spend in frivolous conversations, vain amusements, or dangerous visits, a time which he could render so useful to them? Oh! how much to be pitied is that flock whose pastor does not understand the value of time! His parish resembles the field of the slothful man. "I passed by the field of the slothful . . and behold it was all covered with nettles, and thorns had covered the face thereof in his parish; irreligion and immorality stalk about undisturbed; there is nothing there to defend them from the invasion of every vice; the stone wall was broken down." (Prov. xxiv.) Is not this the usual source of scandals, which bring widespread contagion and death, when given by those to whom the people look up to, and in whom they have a right to find their model?

I understand, O Lord, how deeply I have sinned against Thee and Thy Church; against my brethren and against myself, by squandering that time which might have procured so much glory for Thee, so much happiness for my brethren, and so many merits for myself. Thou hast, indeed, shown great patience toward me, by leaving in my possession the precious treasure of time, of which I made such a criminal abuse. Grant that, like the laborers of the eleventh hour, I may compensate for the short duration of my labor by great activity and fervor! May I, by the saintly use of the remaining days of my life, obtain Thy compassion and mercy, with a full remission of my past transgressions! I am resolved at last to appreciate the value of "Thy time," to remember the days of old which I have lost, and the eternal years upon which I will soon enter.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Loss of time is a great sin in the priest. Because time is in itself very precious; because the time of the priest is still more so.

The value of time is measured by the price it has cost, and by the blessings which the wise use of it may procure. Let us ask of Calvary the value of the graces which each moment of time brings to us. As long as I have time I have the grace of prayer; and by prayer I can obtain all the other graces. The glory of God and the salvation of souls are the fruits of well-spent time. The glory which I procure to God in serving Him is, in a certain respect, more pleasing to Him than the glory I will give Him in heaven. From the standpoint of salvation, time is rightly appreciated in heaven and in hell alone. What must I think of time that can obtain for me the possession of God, or cause my reprobation if I do not use it well? The time of the priest is yet more valuable—first, because the life of the priest is consecrated to God; secondly, because the faithful priest is better able than any one else to procure the glory of God and the happiness of his fellow man.

Second Point.—Sins which loss of time occasions. A well-spent time is as a shield for the heart. Idleness leads to all vices. Of this Solomon, David, Samson are sad examples. Vigilance and fervor are the only means to make up for lost time, as far as this can be done.

MEDITATION XLIX.

LOSS OF TIME. (Continued.)

1.—*How Common it is.*
2.—*What We should Do to Avoid it.*

First Point.—Who can say that he has not misemployed time? Time is lost in four different ways.

I. In doing evil. Time is life. Has God given, does God preserve it in order that He may be thereby offended? When I sin I turn the gifts of God against Himself; I employ in outraging Him what I should have used in serving Him. Alas! how many days of my life I have blackened through this detestable ingratitude. Each moment of my existence, as it passes away, enters into the vast bosom of eternity and ceases to belong to time; but, before it enters therein, it presents itself to the master of all time, and acts as a witness either for or against me according to the good or bad use I made of it! Great God, how many accusers await me before Thy tribunal, if when I shall appear before it I have

not obtained pardon for the sins committed by loss of time! What shall I answer when, placing before my eyes all those moments, every one of which brought me a blessing from Thee, Thou wilt point out so many of them for which I returned to Thee naught but indifference and contempt! "He hath called against me the time." (Lam. i. 15.)

II. Time is lost in doing nothing, and this suffices to lose our souls. When I live in idleness, I cease to fulfil the end of my existence, which is to glorify God by serving Him. I become the unsavory salt which is cast away; the useless servant who is condemned; the barren tree which is cut down and thrown into the fire. See, says St. Bernard, of what punishments works of iniquity are deserving, since uselessness alone suffices to draw down upon you the awful fate of reprobation. *Attende quid mereatur iniquitas, si sola sufficit inutilitas ad damnationem.* (Ep. 104.) What advantage is there in not being condemned for evil works, if I am condemned for the good works which I should have done and did not do? As a learned and holy cardinal was visiting a bishop who was on his death-bed, and whose life had been very edifying, he asked him how he felt; the dying man, wholly occupied with his soul, answered that he was tranquil; that he had made a serious examination of all his life, and endeavored to wash away his transgressions in the blood of Jesus Christ. "This is well," replied the visitor, "the faults which you committed are forgiven, since you asked pardon for them; let me ask you, however, did you think also of imploring the mercy of God for the good He expected of you, and which, perhaps, you did not do according to the measure of your duties?" At this unexpected question the sick man, rousing, as it were, from a profound lethargy, heaved a deep sigh, and exclaimed: "What will become of me, O my God, if Thou treatest me according to the severity of Thy justice, on account of my countless omissions?"

III. Time is lost in not doing what we should do. Let us not forget this great principle, that all the time which we do not spend in serving God is lost time, no matter what else we do. Now God is served by him alone who does His will. He is the sovereign Lord and absolute Master of all conditions of life, and He wills that every one shall fulfil the duties of his own station. The man of God must attend to the things of God; the pastor to the welfare of his flock. Such is God's will. Have we not lost much time in reading fanciful works, in useless visits, nay, in works which are good in themselves, yet displeasing to God, because not connected with our profession? What of these secular occupations which we renounced when we entered the sacred militia? Were they

not expressly forbidden by St. Paul? "No man being a soldier of Christ entangleth himself with secular business." (2 Tim. ii. 4) O, man of God, have you forgotten what you are? Have you forgotten your very name? *Sint sui nominis memores Clerici, quo continuo admonentur se curis mundi sequestratos, et in sortem Domini esse vocatos.* (Conc. Camer. 1586.) What is there in common with the priest who owes all his time to the extension of the kingdom of God, and those puerile matters with which worldings are so much engrossed? *Magnis addictus es; noli minimis occupari; minima et vilia sunt quaecumque ad saeculi quaestus, et non ad lucra pertinent animarum.* (Pet. Bles.) *Saecularibus relinquatur saecularia jura componere.* (St. Pet. Dam.)

Jesus refuses one of His disciples permission to go and put order to His affairs before following Him, and openly declares that this would be retrograding instead of advancing in the path he had chosen. Two brothers ask Him to act as arbiter in the division of their property, but He dismisses him who had made the proposition, saying: "Man, who has appointed Me judge or divider over you?" (Tim. xii. 14.) Does not this saying condemn you, O ministers of God, who so readily engage in worldly occupations under the pretext of charity? Our Lord could have exercised charity in the case just mentioned, but He would not. He owed all His time to the things of His Father. *In his, quae Patris mei sunt, oportet me esse.*

IV. Time may be lost by doing the will of God, if we do not do it as He wills it to be done. He commands us do to good and to do it properly. If I act negligently in the performance of my duties, I deserve nothing but maledictions. "Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully." (Jer. xlviii. 10.) If I do not labor for God, perhaps I obey the world, perhaps my natural inclinations; but I assuredly do not obey God; I am not the servant of God. What reward for their labor will all those men of study and action receive who, according to St. Augustine, make great strides, but outside of the right way? How many, even amongst the evangelical laborers themselves, spent much time in fruitless fishing, because they did not cast their nets in the name of the Saviour, or in His Holy Spirit? O my God, how much of "Thy time" I have lost.

Second Point.—What we should do in order to spend time well. I. We should regulate it. This is a capital point. *Certum sibi vitae genus constituere tanti momenti esse duco, ut totius vitae, vel recte vel male traducendae, fundamentum in eo positum esse putem.* (St. Greg. Naz.) Without rule we nearly always do our own will, and rarely that of the Almighty. *Iste non secundum*

Deum, sed secundum se vivit, qui, si poterit, est cum quibus vult, pergit quo vult et quantum vult, ridet et jocatur inter quos et ubi vult, etc. (St. Bern.) *Cunctis consulendum est, ut taliter unumquodque disponant opus, quatenus quaelibet hora propriam habeat rationem; sciant quando orationi, quando lectioni . . . incumbendum sit.* (St. Laur. Just.)

This was the most urgent recommendation addressed by M. Olier to the young ecclesiastics who left the seminary. He assured them that if, for the love of God, they were faithful in observing a good rule, they had every reason to hope that they would live according to God's will; but if, on the contrary, they were not punctual in this resolution, they had everything to fear for their salvation.

We find time for everything when our time is well regulated. Those who live without rule go out of the way, following the vagueness of their thoughts, obeying the dictates of caprice and inconstancy, uncertain as to what they will or will not do, and when the end of the day comes they find many moments for the employment of which they find no justification. But in a regulated life there is no vacuum; everything has been foreseen; everything follows in order; every action is more meritorious, because performed through obedience, and because of the victories we gain over ourselves.

II. Meditate often upon the rapidity with which time escapes us, and the little of it that we possess. The past is not ours, the future is not come; that future is uncertain, and, as long as it remains a "time to come," is as useless to us as the past. The present time is the only one that belongs to us; but we hardly have it when it has passed away. It has more of the nonentity than of the being, says St. Augustine, for its nature is to pass and to cease to be. And yet how precious this short moment is! What is the value of a day, of an hour? What would not a reprobate give to obtain time to make an act of contrition? Oh, the folly and blindness of those who find the days too long, who have need of pastimes! Let us listen to St. Bernard: *Licet fabulari, aiunt, donec hora praetereat. O! donec hora praetereat, quam tibi ad agendam poenitentiam, ad obtinendam veniam, ad acquirendam, gratiam, ad promerendam gloriam, misericordia conditoris indulserat! O! donec transeat tempus, quo divinam propitiare debueras pietatem, properare ad angelicam societatem, suspirare ad amissam haereditatem . . . flere commissam iniquitatem!*

III. Endeavor always to have pure and perfect intentions. They communicate so much merit to all our actions, whenever they are pure! God sees the preparation of the heart. An ardent

desire to please Him, a continual intention to do and suffer all, through this motive, is so excellent a means to redeem time, that it will enable us to compensate for years and days of our past life. Let us not complain of the short duration of our life; it is long enough for him who will sanctify himself; it is too long for him who will abuse it.

IV. There are two most important moments in the day, the first and the last. A generous offering of one's self in the early morning will prepare the way for much good, and a good examination in the evening may repair much evil.

Enter seriously within yourself, and take a firm resolution to make a holy use of your time. In your thanksgivings after Mass address to Jesus Christ the following prayer of St. Bernard: "Take, O my God, that part which remains of my miserable life. Let it all be spent for Thee; and, as to the time which I have lost, do not despise, I beseech Thee, a contrite and humble heart."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Who can say that he has not misemployed time? It is lost: I. In doing evil. Time is life. Was it given me, has it been preserved, in order to offend God? O Lord, what shall I answer when Thou wilt remind me of so many moments, every one of which brought me a blessing from Thee, blessings for which Thou receivest from me nothing but ingratitude? II. In doing nothing. What matters it not to be condemned for sins committed, if one is condemned for good actions omitted? III. In not doing what I am bound to do. I exist for the sole purpose of serving God, and God is served by the performance of His will alone. IV. By not doing good in the manner it ought to be done. Lukewarmness and want of intention may spoil actions most excellent in themselves.

Second Point.—What we should do in order to spend our time well. I. We should regulate it. This point is very important. Without a rule of life we obey caprice and are subject to inconstancy. In a regulated life everything is foreseen, everything is meritorious; obedience and mortification are practised. II. Often remember the shortness of life; the present moment is the only one that belongs to us. III. Endeavor to purify your intentions in order to add to their perfection. Make a generous offering of yourself the first thing in the morning, and in the evening make a serious examination of your conscience. Set apart some time in the day for the renewing of your intentions.

MEDITATION L.

ABUSE OF DIVINE GRACE.

1.—*The Abuse of Divine Grace is Criminal in all Persons.*

2.—*Much more Criminal in the Priest.*

First Point.—The crime of abusing divine grace considered in itself. This consists in contemning God in His very gifts; in rendering useless all that Jesus Christ did and suffered in the work of our Redemption.

Infinite respect is due to the authority of almighty God; but it would seem that His great kindness to us deserves still greater regard. When He commands, nothing can dispense me from submitting. Should I try to persuade myself that the commandment is above my strength, that it is too incommoding, that it is susceptible of a milder interpretation, etc., all the false arguments of passion would not extenuate the crime of my revolt; but if, notwithstanding all pretexts, I am still guilty when I disregard the laws of the sovereign Lord, is not my sin much greater when I disregard even His graces? When God speaks as a Master, my duty is to obey Him; but when He seeks me as a Father, offering me His blessings and favors, if I reject them contemptuously, do I not wound Him to the heart? do I not at the same time act cruelly toward myself? Drawn by the inclination of my corrupt nature, I behold myself on the brink of the abyss; and I hear Thy voice, O my God! Thou stretchest forth Thy hand to me. What then, shall I refuse to turn to Thee? Shall I remain deaf to Thy sweet invitations in order to turn to creatures and to listen to the voice of passion alone? What odious preference; what insulting contempt of Thy kindness!

But behold here the most detestable of crimes. When I thus abuse Thy gifts I destroy and annihilate, inasmuch as I can, the magnificent work of Redemption, at least so far as I am concerned. Behold the Son of God debasing himself, taking the form of a slave, born in poverty, living in the midst of labors and humiliations, dying amidst tórments and insults . . . according to the plan of God's infinite wisdom all this was necessary to obtain for me the grace of salvation; shall I reject these graces, refuse to profit by them? Ah! it is the blood of Jesus Christ that I reject, and the Redemption that I render useless is one purchased by so high a price! *Ergo evacuatum est scandalum crucis!*

Second Point.—The abuse of divine grace more criminal in a priest. He knows the infinite value of grace, its necessity, the particular excellence of the graces which are offered to him.

The greater part of the faithful may plead as an excuse their ignorance, which is a result of their want of education; but the priest has a thorough knowledge of this gift of divine grace, which is truly inappreciable. From all his studies concerning this matter of grace, he has drawn the inference that, after the beatific vision, divine grace is above everything that is not God; that it is the price of the labors, of the sufferings, of the death of Jesus Christ; that it begins, increases, and brings to perfection all our merits; that it is the seed of eternal glory; for the just, by every act of obedience to its inspirations, acquire and receive a new degree of sanctifying grace, and a right to a new degree of heavenly felicity! Let me, therefore, gather together all the treasures contained in the earth and in the seas; add to these treasures all that human intellect can contrive, . . . in comparison with all these let men learn that the smallest of graces, an inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is thousands of times more worthy our admiration, gratitude, and desire.

This precious blessing is, however, too often neglected, through fear of a trifling sacrifice, not only by Christians who ignore its value, but by priests appointed to explain the nature of divine grace.

Ah, Lord, when I thus disregard the gifts of Thy love, the fruits of Thy tears and of Thy blood, when I disregard the price of heaven, am I not more blind than the blind whom Thou hast sent me to enlighten!

When the priest abuses divine grace he knows well that it is as necessary as it is excellent. Without it one can acquire no merit in the order of salvation. This is a point of faith defined by the Church (Conc. d'Or. Sess. 6. Can. 3), and clearly taught in the Gospel. "Without Me," says the Saviour, without My grace which prompts you to do good, and sustains you in its practice, "you can do nothing" deserving eternal reward in heaven. *Christus non ait: Sine me parum potestis facere, sed: Nihil potestis facere.* (St. Aug.)

The teaching of this doctrine often recurs in the epistles of St. Paul. He writes to the Philippians: "It is God who worketh in you both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will." (Ph. ii. 13.) And to the faithful of Corinth: "Not that we are sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." (2 Cor. iii. 5.) It follows that unless I am prompted by an interior grace, it is impossible for me to begin to perform, or even to have the will to perform any act of supernatural virtue. What then do I do when I either neglect or reject it? I refuse the key of heaven which God in His goodness offers to me. I reject a talent worth an immortal crown, the only talent which can procure it. Strange blindness, almost in-

comprehensible in a priest, a blindness which conceals from me my most sacred interests! I am afflicted at the loss of a trifle, and I am not affected by the abusing of God's graces, and yet compared with them all the gold and silver of the world are not so much as a handful of dust.

Were it at least only common graces I thus abuse! But those which Thou grantest me, O Lord, are by their number and their excellence a touching evidence of Thy predilection for me! I remember the graces connected with my functions, and so many pious exercises which unite me to Thee, O thou uncreated light and consuming fire! Thou dost in Thy kind prudence offer me at every moment the occasion of practising some virtue, patience, meekness, charity, so that I may continually add to the treasure of my merits! . . Shall I complain because these abundant graces urge me on to attain that greater perfection which Thou requirest of me! This would be to complain of a fact which demands of me the most lively gratitude. Why dost Thou demand of me so many virtues, if not because Thou hast in store for me the most beautiful crown? Thou requirest of me greater fidelity because Thou hast for me greater love! Thou wishest me to be more perfect in order to make me more happy. How much longer shall I resist the paternal solicitations of Thy grace? Give, O Lord, to Thy servant a docile heart, that he may never more receive that grace in vain. So dispose my soul, O my God, that henceforth the divine seed may find it a "good ground, yielding fruit an hundred fold."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The abuse of grace is in itself a great crime. This is to despise God in His very gifts. When He speaks as a Master I am in duty bound to obey; but when I contemptuously reject His blessings, at the very time that He seeks me as a Father, I then inflict a wound on His love. God stretches forth His hand to me, and I will not deign to see it! I close my ears to His sweet invitation, and I give my whole attention to creatures; I listen to the voice of passion alone. I thus destroy, as far as I am concerned, the magnificent work of Redemption. It is the blood of Jesus Christ which I cast from me.

Second Point.—This abuse more criminal in the priest. He has more light concerning the value and necessity of grace. He knows it to be superior to everything that is not God; that it is the seed of eternal glory. Without this grace, which prompts us to do good, and sustains us in its practice, we can do nothing deserving of heavenly reward. Think of the number and excellence of the graces given to the priest.

MEDITATION LI.

MANNER IN WHICH GOD PUNISHES THE ABUSE OF HIS GRACE.

1.—*In Time.*
2.—*In Eternity.*

First Point.—In this life God withdraws His graces in order to punish the abuse of them in the priest. This is the ordinary punishment of this abuse; this punishment is just; it is dreadful.

I. The withdrawal of grace is the ordinary punishment for having abused it. There is nothing more clearly laid down, more frequently repeated in the Sacred Books. "My people heard not My voice; and Israel hearkened not to Me; so I let them go according to the desires of their heart; they shall walk in their own inventions." (Ps. lxxx. 12, 13.) "Walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not." (Joan. xii. 35.) "He hath blinded their eyes and hardened their heart, that they should not see with their eyes nor understand with their heart, and be converted and I should heal them." (Ib. 40.) "I say to you that the kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and shall be given to a nation yielding the fruits thereof." (Matt. xxi. 43.) "Because you reject the word of God, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold we turn to the Gentiles." (Acts xiii. 46.)

The Scriptures are filled with threats of this kind, and the numerous examples which they relate demonstrate that God does in this manner avenge the abuse of His grace. Heli, a high priest, seems to be guilty of no sin save that of excessive condescension toward his children; Saul had been chosen King of the Jews by God Himself; Judas had been called by the voice of Jesus Christ to be one of His apostles; yet all were rejected, all lost the grace of God because they themselves had rejected it. Is not this punishment too common in our days, especially amongst the ministers of the altar? There are, alas, many whom God permits to slumber in a state of tepidity, and, worst of all, to become spiritually blind, in order to punish the abuse they have made of His inspirations and merciful patience!

II. The withdrawal of grace is a just punishment. Grace is an evidence of the love of the heavenly Spouse, who stands at the door of my heart. He knocks at the door; He sweetly insists that I admit Him to load me with His favors. I resist His invitations, I refuse to receive Him. He sees Himself contemned, and now

withdraws; is not this a just punishment? Can I expect that He will reward the insult? The kingdom is taken away—from whom? From him who renders himself unworthy to wear the crown, and casts it away with contempt. Is not this both just and rational?

III. The withdrawal of grace is a dreadful punishment. What is the nature of this withdrawal but God Himself the sovereign Good forsaking His creature, and sin and hell approaching him? The greatest of all calamities, that of dying an enemy of God, is simply a withdrawal from a soul of that decisive grace with the aid of which it would have done sincere penance before leaving this world. The withdrawal of grace is the withdrawal of light and strength; the disappearance of all virtue; and, as it were, all hope of salvation vanishing away. But, O my God, it is not yet time to despair, and if I but wish it, that time will never come; for Thou hast promised always to receive kindly the repentant sinner, and this very day I have received of Thee a most precious grace—the grace of being terrified on account of my criminal abuse of Thy grace. This terror will draw me nigh unto Thee, O my God. I feel within my soul an increasing esteem for Thy inspirations, for Thy grace, and I am resolved to improve these precious talents!

Second Point.—Abuse of graces is punished after death by a more strict judgment, and more bitter regrets. "To whom much has been given, of him much shall be required." (Luc. xii. 48.) How shall I be able, before the tribunal of Christ, to bear this reproach, as dreadful for me as it was for the Jews? "If I had not come and spoken to them they would have no sin." (Joan. xv. 22.) You would have been less guilty had you been less favored in the distribution of My blessings. Because of the number and excellence of My graces which you have neglected, you are now a transgressor without excuse, and I shall be your Judge without compassion.

How great will be my shame when, joined to the reproach of my Judge, I will hear the plaintive voices of many reprobates whose means of salvation were so few compared to mine? Ah! had the Lord done for them all that He has done for me! The easier it was for me to gain heaven, the more horrible will be my dwelling in hell! It will then be too late to accuse myself, to acknowledge the cause of my misfortune, or to try to remedy it. Had I still but one of those graces which were lavished upon me during so long a time! Alas! that one grace is not now within my reach. The source of grace is dried up. Through my own fault I am now in these burning flames, in this exterior darkness, in this place of torments. . . To this I have been brought by abusing the graces of my God!

Thou givest me light, O my God. May heaven and earth praise Thee for this new favor! Through the help of Thy grace itself I understand the immense loss I have incurred in rejecting it; the outrage I have thereby offered Thee, and the dreadful danger to which I exposed myself. I now understand with what great attention I should watch the moments of grace; how gratefully I should receive its inspirations; how faithfully I should make it fructify. This is my duty, O my God, and I feel determined to act accordingly.

In a few moments I shall put on the sacred vestments; I will raise up to Thee these hands of mine, which are, it is true, those of a sinner, but which after all will be sanctified by the contact of the most holy of all victims. Look down, O Lord; look down upon the face of Thy Christ. And Thou, O my adorable Saviour, Author of grace, pardon me the abuse I have made of it. Since the Church desires me to ask for grace to be freed from all my miseries, past, present and future, forget the negligences and the sins of the past; heal my present infirmities; and, as for the future, grant me grace to improve, with wisdom and fidelity, the gift of Thy divine grace.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—In this present life God withdraws His grace in order to punish the abuse of it. I. This punishment is the ordinary result of this abuse. "My people heard not My voice, so I let them go according to the desires of their heart." Heli, Saul, Judas lose the grace of God because they themselves rejected it.

II. This punishment is just. The kingdom is taken away. From whom? From him who made himself unworthy to wear the crown.

III. The withdrawal of grace is a dreadful punishment. It means that God, the sovereign Good, departs from us; that the sovereign evil, sin and hell, is approaching.

Second Point.—God punishes the abuse of His grace by a more strict judgment, followed by more bitter regrets. How shall I be able, at the tribunal of Christ, to bear the reproach: "You would be less guilty had you not received so many choice blessings"? Ah! if the Lord had done for others all that He did for me! The easier for me it was to gain heaven, the more horrible will be my dwelling in hell!

MEDITATION LII.

VENIAL SIN. ITS NATURE.

1.—*What is Venial Sin, according to the Principles of Faith?*
2.—*What Consequences must you Draw from these Principles?*

There is question here of those faults which are committed intentionally, notwithstanding the warnings of conscience; of sins which would in reality be mortal sins, if the matter thereof were more important. For a priest to take no account of these transgressions because they are not mortal is a strange blindness indeed; it makes it evident that his thoughts in this matter are not those of Jesus Christ, his teacher. Let us consider the nature of venial sin.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself a man covered with ulcers, which disfigure him and make his presence painful even to his best friends.

Second Prelude.—Make known to me, O my God, the nature of venial sin, especially when committed by a priest; grant that I may hate it as much as it deserves to be hated.

First Point.—What is venial sin according to the principles of faith? It is a transgression by thought, word, action or omission against the divine law, which, however, is not grevious enough to make us lose the grace of God, and constitute us His enemy. In this species of faults everything is found which constitutes a sin. God commands, man refuses to obey. There is no difference between mortal and venial sin, save that which exists between *more* and *less*. More or less fulness in the consent; more or less importance in the matter. In either case the will of the man is preferred to that of God. It is an offense against God by a vile creature for a vile motive.

There is, therefore, in venial sin a veritable contempt of God, a real injury to all His perfections. This injury is light, indeed, when compared to that connected with mortal sin; but its gravity is infinite when considered in itself, since it attacks an infinite Majesty. *Non leve est Deum in exiguo contemnere.* (St. Jer.) Yet this is what I do when I give way to irritation, secret jealousy, light excesses in eating or drinking; when I speak ill of others, though not so as considerably to damage their reputation. The same should be said of officious lies, acting through vanity, dissipation of mind, curiosities which withdraw me from myself; of want of application in my religious exercises, which occasions so many faults contrary to the respect which I owe to the Lord.

Second Point.—Let us draw the consequences of those principles. Venial sin is an offense against God. When the priest commits it without remorse, ought he not to be uneasy regarding the fulfilling of the great precept: *Diliges Dominum tuum ex toto corde tuo?* You say that you love God, and you think it nothing to displease, to resist Him when He commands a thing which can be easily performed! You grieve the Spirit of God; you afflict the heart of Jesus Christ, which was "wounded" by "our" smaller "iniquities," as it was "bruised on account of our crimes!"

But by venial sin I do not incur the disgrace of the Lord. Will you, then, never obey Him except when you hear the noise of His thunder! Is it He whom you love, or is it not rather yourself?

Venial sin, which offends God, is the evil of God. It is, therefore, next to mortal sin, more to be dreaded than all the evils which may befall mere creatures either in time or in eternity. The annihilation and damnation of all men would certainly be a horrible calamity; yet it would be wrong to desire to avert it by the commission of only one venial sin, were it in our power to do so. Another fearful calamity would be to see God banish from heaven His Blessed Mother, with all the angels and the elect; and yet a greater evil would be to commit one venial sin in order to keep the Holy Virgin and the elect in the possession of their happiness. Think of the tears of all mankind, the torments of the martyrs, the austerities of anchorites, the sufferings, the charity of all the saints; think of all the good works performed in the world, or to be performed before the last day; all these satisfactions, unless you add to them the infinite satisfactions of the Word Incarnate, could not compensate for the outrage offered to God by one venial sin.

What, now, must we think of a priest who would console himself for having offended God, and continues to offend Him, by saying: After all, I do not do much harm; I am guilty of venial sins only! "Thus to speak," says St. Bernard, "is hardness of heart already commenced; it is a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost." *Nemo dicat in corde suo: Levia sunt ista, non curo corrigere; non est magnum si in his maneam venialibus minimisque peccatis; haec est enim, dilectissimi, impoenitentia; haec est blasphemia in Spiritum sanctum.* (Serm. 1. De convers. S. Pauli.)

We find the same horror of venial sin in all the saints. Let us listen to some of them. St. Edmund said: *Malo insilire in roqum ardentem quam peccatum ullum sciens admittere in Deum meum.* (St. Ignatius Loyola.)

"Whoever cares for the purity of his conscience should humble himself in the presence of God, on account of his lightest offenses.

considering that He whom he disobeyed is infinite in all His perfections." St. Catharine of Genoa says: "I would, if necessary, cast myself into an ocean of flames in order to avoid the slightest transgression, and I would rather remain there forever than come out of it by committing venial sin." St. Catharine of Siena: "If the soul, which is immortal, could die, the sight of one venial sin defiling its beauty would suffice to cause its death." Blessed Alphonsus Rodriguez often exclaimed: "May I, O Lord, suffer all the pains of hell rather than commit one venial sin!"

O my God, my thoughts would be the thoughts of the saints, regarding everything that offends Thee, did I but know and love Thee as the saints knew and loved Thee. Come, then, and reveal Thyself to my soul, and since the moment approaches when Thou wilt visit me in the bowels of Thy mercy, kindle within me, O Lord, the fire of Thy sacred love. Whoever loves Thee, hates sin more than death, more than hell itself. *Si Christum vere amaremus, judicaremus utique amati offensam gehenna esse graviorem.* (St. J. Chry.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What is venial sin according to the principles of faith? It is a thought, word, act or omission contrary to the law of God, which, however, is not grievous enough to make us lose the grace of God. There is no difference between mortal and venial sin save that which exists between the more or less perfect consent, the more or less important matter. In either case the will of man is preferred to the will of God. Who is this transgressor, and why does he offend? In venial sin there is a real injury to all the perfections of God.

Second Point.—Draw the consequences of those principles. Venial sin is an offense against God. Can he who is so little concerned about its commission flatter himself that he accomplishes the great precept, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart?" When I obey God only when He threatens me with anger, can I say that I love Him? Do I not love myself more than Him? Venial sin offends God. It is therefore, next to mortal sin, more to be dreaded than all the evils which may befall mere creatures, either in time or in eternity. When one says that he does not do much harm, that he commits only venial sins, such language, according to St. Bernard, shows hardness of heart already begun; it is a blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

MEDITATION LIII.

VENIAL SIN. ITS EFFECTS. ITS PUNISHMENTS.

1.—*Effects of Venial Sin.*
2.—*Punishment of Venial Sin.*

First Prelude.—Picture to yourself a man all covered with wounds, bleeding profusely from every ghastly pore, being gradually reduced to a dying condition; or a soul in the midst of the flames of purgatory, atoning to the justice of God for the debts contracted by committing venial sins.

Second Prelude.—Pray to God to give you the knowledge and hatred of venial sin.

First Point.—Effects of venial sin. If I am not alarmed when I consider these effects, I should feel alarmed at my own state of insensibility.

I. It diminishes the light of our mind, and obscures the teachings of faith. Every venial sin that I commit is a cloud which rises between my intelligence and the sun of eternal truth. The more frequently I commit these faults, the thicker the cloud becomes; it will soon intercept the rays of that divine sun, and I will be surrounded with darkness. Such is the cause of that torpid and soulless faith with which I treat the most sacred things, and of that life of illusions in which I slumber. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." I complain of not seeing Thee, O my God; of experiencing no feelings of Thy presence during the meditation, the holy sacrifice, my thanksgiving. The light is within me, and yet I am in darkness! Alas! is my heart pure? Do I sincerely hate venial sin?

II. It weakens the will. Every sin that is committed, be it ever so slight, is a concession made to some wicked inclination. Whatever I give to the love of creatures is withdrawn from the love of God. These two loves may be compared to two fires, one of which gains in intensity accordingly as the other decreases. Our multiplied infidelities multiply our attachments, that is to say, our chains, and such is the cause of a state of torpor, of a certain incapacity to do good, in many persons. What do so many good desires amount to since they are never realized? They have the wings, but they are kept down by fetters. *Alae quid prosunt capto pede?*

III. Venial sin disfigures and defiles that masterpiece of God's hands, viz., the soul clothed with righteousness, and par-

ticularly with sacerdotal righteousness. It is a blot upon a garment of resplendent whiteness, an ulcer upon a beautiful face. St. Augustine characterizes venial sin in the following manner: *Scabies nostrum decus ita exterminans, ut ab illius sponsi, qui speciosus forma prae filiis hominum est, castissimis amplexibus nos separet.* St. Augustine says: *Pustulae quae quidem animam non occidunt, sed eam tamen quasi horrenda lepra repletam summopere deformant.*

IV. Venial sin lowers me a degree in the state of grace, and deprives me of the right to ascend a step higher in the glory of heaven. What is the extent of this loss? God is less known, less beloved, less intimately possessed during eternity. Behold the consequences of a single venial sin.

V. It deprives me of those choice graces which are the reward of a fervent soul. "With the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." (Luc. vi. 38.) We are ungenerous in our fidelity toward God. He will be parsimonious in His benefactions to us. When I so easily permit myself to offend so great and at the same time so amiable a God, I render myself unworthy of this special providence, of which generous souls are the privileged object; I have no right to expect those exceptional blessings destined to reward the labors of the devout priest.

VI. It disturbs my peace of mind, and sometimes throws me into a state of great anxiety. "Who has resisted Him, and hath had peace." (Job ix. 4.) Moreover, did I not perhaps overstep the boundary which separates venial from mortal sin? Is there always so great a space from the one to the other? Is it always easy to distinguish between them? *Difficillimum est invenire, periculosissimum definire.*

VII. Venial sin leads to mortal sin, just as sickness leads to death. The declaration is explicit: "He that is unjust in that which is little, it unjust also in that which is greater." (Luc. xvi. 10.) Experience has always confirmed the truth of the following maxims of the holy Doctors. *Nemo repente summus. A minimis incipiunt qui in majora proruunt. Minuta plura peccata, si negligantur, occidunt.* What was the primary cause of the crimes of Cain, of Saul, of Judas? There was apparently nothing alarming in the beginning. How many outrages against God would not Luther have spared, how much blood to Europe, how many tears to the Church, if he had in time repressed a growing jealousy? The torrent, which in its headlong course lays waste whole provinces, was at its source but a small, harmless rivulet. A spark becomes a great fire, the cause of a widespread conflagration. Such are the local results of the view we have taken of this matter.

Each venial sin diminishes our power to do good, increases our inclination to evil, and God treats us as we treat Him. "Thou that despisest, shalt not thyself also be despised?" (Is. xxxiii. 1.) Thou despisest Me, unfaithful priest; I also will despise thee. Thou carest not for My favors; I will refuse thee My aid, and My revenge will be thy fall. "Revenge is Mine, and I will repay thee in time." (Deut. xxxii. 35.)

Second Point.—Punishments of venial sin, in this world and in the next. God has often in this world inflicted terrible punishments for those venial sins which we so easily commit. Moses is barred from the Promised Land for a want of confidence, which I perhaps would have qualified as excessive humility. A prophet, after having performed miracles, after having shattered with a word the altar which Jeroboam had erected to his idols, is strangled by a lion, because he too readily believed the words of another prophet, who invited him to a repast in his house contrary to the order of God. Forty-two small children, *pueri parvi*, are torn to pieces by two bears for failing in respect toward Eliseus. Oza is struck dead for having touched the ark, in order to prevent its tottering. Fifty Bethsamites are punished in the same way for having looked indiscreetly upon the same sacred monument. David sees seventy thousand of his subjects perish in punishment for the vain complacency in which he had indulged, in taking the census of his people. Does not this suffice to make me understand how God looks on venial sins? Yet all these punishments are nothing compared to those which He inflicts in the next world.

In spirit I enter the gloomy prisons of purgatory. What does faith teach me concerning this place of punishment? I behold in purgatory souls that are just, predestined, and so dear to God that He ardently desires to share His own happiness with them. Here they are, however, shut out from heaven, it may be for an almost interminable period, condemned to suffer in flames which, according to St. Thomas, are identical in nature with those of hell. *Eodem igne torquetur damnatus, purgatur electus.* What is the cause of this rigorous expiation? It is the sad but just penalty of sin. A father kindles a great fire, and casts his son into the midst of the burning pile, notwithstanding his cries and tears. Was there ever a more tender father than God, was there ever a son as much beloved and cherished as man? I must infer that this son has most cruelly maltreated his Father.

If I now endeavor to learn how many of these faults I have committed, either through wilful ignorance or through negligence; how many of them I commit every day through idle thoughts, inconsiderate loquacity, the habit of yielding to caprice; if I recall

to my mind my many irreverences in the holy place, during the recitation of the Office, at the holy altar, in the administration of the sacraments, should I not fittingly apply to myself the sentiments of the prophet when he exclaimed: "Evils without number have surrounded me; my iniquities have overtaken me, and I was not able to see. They have multiplied above the hairs of my head, and my heart hath forsaken me." (Ps. xxxix. 13.) O my God, forgive me my countless sins, grant me that watchful delicacy of conscience which is ever startled at the very appearance of sin. I know that in order to walk in this path I have need of constant vigilance over myself, and to forego many gratifications that are apparently innocent; but can I, O my God, offer too high a price for the two-fold advantage of offending Thee less, and of escaping the deplorable consequences of shortcomings in Thy service?

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The effects of venial sin. It obscures the intelligence and darkens the teachings of faith. To the pure heart it is that God reveals Himself. It weakens the will, strengthens evil inclinations; from this cause results a state of languor, a sort of incapacity to do good. It imprints in the soul a horrible deformity; like an ulcer upon a beautiful face, a leprosy which repels the heavenly Spouse. It deprives us of a degree of grace in time, and of glory in eternity. It renders us unworthy of the privileged attentions which God loves to bestow upon the fervent. It disturbs our peace and causes cruel anxieties. Did I not overstep the limits which separate the venial from the mortal sin? It leads on to mortal sin, just as sickness leads on to death. How did the crimes of Cain, of Saul, of Judas originate? What could be apparently less alarming than the jealousy of Luther in its first beginnings?

Second Point.—Punishments of venial sin. Moses is excluded from the Promised Land because of a slight diffidence. Remember the forty-two small children punished for wanting in respect toward a prophet; Oza, the Bethsamites, David. What of the punishments inflicted upon the souls of purgatory for the venial sins not expiated in this world? Who are they, what do they suffer? O my God, give me that delicacy of conscience which is troubled at the mere appearance of evil.

MEDITATION LIV.

TEPIDITY IN A PRIEST. ITS EVIL.

Tepidity is incompatible with—

1.—*The most Important Precepts of the Law.*

2.—*The most Essential Obligations of the Priesthood.*

3.—*The most Ordinary Functions of the Priest.*

To be neither cold nor fervent in the service of God, who deserves so much love; to drag one's self along sluggishly in the service of so great and good a master; unconcerned about offending Him; desiring very little to please Him; without ardor for His glory; without zeal for His interests—such is the state of a tepid soul. Oh, what an evil this is in a priest!

First Point.—Lukewarmness incompatible with the most important precepts of the law. The duty of the priest is to cause the divine precepts to be obeyed; but he himself ought to be the first to obey them. Is such the case if he be lukewarm? Let us mention some of these precepts.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart." (Matt. xxii. 37.) The lukewarm man seems to say to God that He does not deserve so much love and respect; that one should not incommode himself in order to please Him; that there is not in the happiness of serving Him, in the hope of possessing Him forever, a sufficient compensation for the sacrifices which He demands. Is this serving God with one's whole heart?

"Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matt. v. 48.) God does not require impossibilities; but in pointing out His own perfection as the goal at which we are permitted to stop, He has made known to us that it is His will that the godly should continue to sanctify himself until he has reached the plenitude of the perfect man. If all the faithful are bound to advance in the way of perfection, will the priest, who is their model and guide, be dispensed from the same obligation? But if he be lukewarm, can he pretend that he accomplishes it? St. Bernard gives us the following idea of perfection: *Indefessum proficiendi studium, jugis conatus ad perfectionem, perfectio vocatur.* Surely tepidity is opposed to this *indefessum proficiendi studium.*

"They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v. 24.) "If any man will come after Me let him deny himself." (Matt. xvi. 24.) "Whosoever does not carry his cross, and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (Luc.

xiv. 27.) If I can not be a disciple of Jesus Christ without renouncing myself, without crucifying my flesh, can I be His representative and minister whilst leading an easy, sensual life, whilst granting to my inclinations almost every indulgence they crave, on the plea that they demand nothing that is openly criminal.

Second Point.—Tepidity is incompatible with the most essential obligations of the priesthood. Behold three of these obligations. The good priest is necessarily a man of prayer, an exemplary man, a man of devotedness and zeal. A lukewarm priest has none of these qualifications.

I. The priest should by continuous and fervent prayers compensate for the scarcity and insufficiency of the prayers of his people; public prayer is his office, as the office of the magistrate is to administer justice. A lukewarm priest can not say that he prays, not even when he recites the great prayer of the Church—the holy breviary. Could he unite his voice to those of the angels, perform upon the earth what those blessed spirits do in heaven, and remain lukewarm! Could he speak to the Lord; repeat daily the burning expressions of King David's love toward his God, and persevere in icy coldness of heart toward his Maker. "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong, living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God." (Ps. xli. 2, 3.) "How lovely are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! my soul longeth and panteth for the courts of the Lord." (Ps. lxxxiii. 2, 3.)

What could be the meaning of these admirable prayers, falling from the lips of a lukewarm priest? Moses comes down from the mountain, his face radiant with heavenly beauty, because he has conversed with the Lord. The disciples of Emmaus declare that their heart "was burning within them," whilst Jesus Christ spoke to them on the way, and I, after my long conversation with God Himself, would not carry away from that divine intercourse one spark of the sacred fire!

II. The priest ought to give good example. His life should be as a faithful mirror, wherein every one may discover the evils he should shun, and the virtues he should practise. Hence the Council of Trent ordains that naught but gravity, modesty, and deep reverence toward God appear in all his deportment. He should be able to say, with St. Paul, to all those whose salvation is committed to him, "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." But if a lukewarm priest were to use such expressions, would he not, with reason, fear to cause anything but flattering comparisons, and remarks to the effect that Jesus Christ was neither sensual in his meals, uncharitable in his conversations,

given to impatience, easily offended nor immortified in all his conduct?

III. The priest should be zealous. The character and powers of the priesthood were conferred on me solely in order to procure the glory of God and the salvation of my brethren. The interests of religion and of souls ought to absorb all my thoughts, and determine me to make any and every sacrifice. Outrages offered to God ought to wound me to the very heart. I should bear the infirmities of my people, and be deeply concerned at the sight of the dangers by which they are surrounded.

Third Point.—Lukewarmness is incompatible with the most ordinary functions of the priesthood. In the pulpit we preach the word of God in all its integrity, not extenuating the severity of His laws concerning sobriety, penitence, abnegation. We proclaim the obligation of belonging to God alone, entirely, and forever. Can you imagine a priest who preaches in this way being lukewarm, and continuing a low sensual life with so sublime a doctrine? Can he reasonably impose such heavy obligations upon others, whilst he himself is loth to submit to their slightest burden? Nothing could be better calculated to cause others to blaspheme the name of the Lord, whereas the priest is the very one who should teach others to glorify it.

Many persons present themselves in the confessional with varying dispositions. There are some who, feeling no sorrow for their crimes, have need of a St. Ambrose to make them weep; others only require a proper guide to make them advance in the ways of perfection. The lukewarm priest is incapable of touching the hearts of the former, and of safely directing the latter; he imparts no fervor, neither do waterless clouds give fertility.

Will he be able to give solid food to the strong, and to sucklings the nutriment which they crave? Will he speak to the perfect in the language of that sublime wisdom of which he possesses not the first rudiments? But it is at the altar that the tepidity of the priest presents its most revolting character. From the altar the lukewarm priest might justly exclaim in the words of St. Bonaventure: *Undique me circumdat amor;* at the altar he well deserves the reproach addressed to him by St. Augustine: *Immersus amori amorem non sentis!* He puts fire into his bosom and yet feels no heat; every morning he goes to the source of all graces, and draws no grace therefrom; he drinks the sacred wine, that fruitful source of every virtue, and no virtue germinates or blossoms in his soul. In him light emits no rays, fire gives no heat, sanctity imparts no holiness. What new miracle is this? Does it come from heaven or from hell? *Tot congestis carbonibus, miraculo diabolico tepescimus.*

As a preparation for your Mass, imagine yourself one of those persons who lay near the pond of Jerusalem. "There lay a great multitude of sick, of blind, of lame, of withered." (Joan. v. 3.) Tepidity partakes of the nature of all these infirmities. Hearken to Our Lord addressing you as He did one of these men: "Wilt thou be made whole?" You need not answer him that "you have no man"; for behold the God-Man who is about to give Himself to you! Have confidence; were your heart a thousand times more lukewarm, if you but desire, He will reanimate it; it will be inflamed anew at the contact of the adorable heart of Jesus.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Tepidity is incompatible with the most important precepts of the law. *Dominum Deum tuum adorabis. Diliges Dominum.* The lukewarm man seems to say to God that he does not deserve so much respect and love that one should incommode himself in order to please Him. *Estote perfecti, sicut et Pater vester coelestis perfectus est. Qui sunt Christi, carnem suam crucifixerunt.* When one is lukewarm, can he flatter himself that he fulfils those precepts?

Second Point.—Tepidity is incompatible with the most essential obligations of the priesthood. A priest ought to be a man of prayer. The priest should compensate for the scarcity and insufficiency of the prayers of the people. If he be lukewarm, in what manner does he recite his breviary? how does he make his meditation? He recites those admirable canticles, *quemadmodum desiderat. . . . Sitivit anima ad te, Deus.* He meditates on the death and judgment of the priest, and yet he is lukewarm! He ought to be a man of zeal, and to give good example. And yet what a contrast between the edification he should give, the zeal which should animate him, and the indolence of his lukewarm life!

Third Point.—Tepidity is incompatible with the most ordinary functions of the priesthood. These ordinary functions are: in the pulpit to preach penance, abnegation, the necessity of belonging entirely to God; in the confessional to move the impenitent, to guide souls destined to advance in perfection. Is the lukewarm priest capable of doing this? At the altar, tepidity has something of a more revolting character. *Tot congestis carbonibus, miraculo diabolico tepescimus.*

MEDITATION LV.

TEPIDITY IN A PRIEST. ITS DANGERS.

1.—*No One has less Fear than the Lukewarm Priest.*
2.—*No One has so much Cause to Fear.*

First Point.—No one has less fear than the lukewarm priest. He deceives himself with regard to the evil that he does, and with regard to the good which he thinks he is doing.

I. Illusion regarding the evil which he does. This unfortunate priest does not listen to the voice of his conscience; and because he knows that he is guiltless of shameful lapses, of the transgressions natural to great criminals, he is unconcerned regarding his daily infidelities, his habitual negligences in the service of God. He thinks nothing of his idle conversation, of time lost in light reading, in useless excursions; of a countless number of other venial sins. In all of his life we can discover no spirit of faith, of mortification, of true Christian fervor, and yet he remains unconcerned! The just man is diffident regarding all his actions. "I feared all my works." (Job ix. 28.) The mere shadow of what offends God makes him tremble. This is a holy fear, the strongest bulwark of innocence. *Beatus homo qui semper est pavidus.* But woe to the priest whom the habit of slight faults does not alarm! After having committed so many infidelities which wound and weaken the soul, he will soon give it the fatal stab—the death-blow of mortal sin. One passes easily from the slumber of tepidity to the sleep of death, and because this transition is made without commotion, because the descent to the abyss is slow and gradual rather than sudden and precipitate, it is seldom that the priest rises from it.

II. Illusion concerning the good which he thinks he does and in which he takes comfort. Tepidity can co-exist with certain virtues which keep the soul in a state of baneful security. The bishop of Ephesus was in many respects an exemplary prelate. Our Lord Jesus Christ spoke of him as follows: "I know thy works and thy labors, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them that are evil . . . but I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou hast fallen." (Ap. ii. 2, 4.) The angel of the Church of Laodicea rested quietly, relying on good works—good indeed in themselves, but infested with the poison of tepidity. I am rich, said he, I am in need of nothing; and he knew not that he was greatly deserving of pity, because of his extreme indigence, of his blindness and

destitution of all that is truly good. It follows that one may enjoy tranquillity of mind whilst in that unhappy state of tepidity, and this is precisely what makes it the more dangerous.

Second Point.— No one has more reason to fear than the lukewarm priest. In him it is that the most dreadful of all oracles finds its application: "The unprofitable servant cast into exterior darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. xxv. 30.) Had this man transgressed the laws of justice, temperance or sobriety? They reproach him only for having neglected to improve the talent he had received. He was an unprofitable servant; such was the extent of his crime. *Servum inutilem.* The graces with which God had loaded this priest brought forth no fruit in his hands; were he free from censure in every other respect, he shall be condemned on account of the good which he did not do. He will be accounted the slayer of all the souls that he could have saved, but at whose ruin he connived by his cruel tepidity. *Tot occidimus, quot ad mortem ire quotidie tepidi et tacentes videmus.* (St. Greg.)

What crime have those virgins committed whom the bridegroom knoweth not, and whom he refuses to admit into the bridal chamber? "Lord, Lord, open to us. . . . Amen, I say to you I know you not." (Matt. xxv. 11, 12.) They had failed to be watchful, they had not entertained the fire of charity in their hearts. "Our lamps are gone out." They had, however, preserved the treasure of chastity; for Our Lord still calls them virgins.

What is meant by that barren fig tree which was cursed by Our Saviour, and immediately withered away? (Matt. xxi.19.) Jesus was hungry. "Returning into the city He was hungry." He seeks for fruit on the branches of this tree, and finds nothing but leaves—useless ornaments which do not save it from that terrible anathema. Men may be satisfied with the exterior works of virtue, but God, who searches the heart, who hungers after our love, sees there nothing but fruitless leaves with which He will not be satisfied. *Folia tantum.*

"Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully." (Jer. xlviii. 10.) In this instance it is not barrenness, culpable inaction, which God punishes; He punishes what in itself is the noblest of all works. *Opus Domini.* The man of God should do the work of God. Instructing the ignorant, visiting the sick, caring for the poor, reclaiming sinners—such works are undoubtedly all divine, yet if I perform them negligently, what benefit shall I derive from them? "Maledictions. Cursed be the man." . . . The curse of God! Ah, what despair will one day come upon those whom He will thus address: "Depart from Me, ye cursed!"

Finally, who would not tremble on hearing Jesus Christ inform a bishop that He is about to banish him from His heart, to vomit him out of His mouth, because he is lukewarm? The expression, "I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth," gives the most frightful idea of the loathing occasioned to the Son of God by the lukewarm priest, and of His repugnance to re-enter a heart for which He has had so great an aversion. Oh, Lord, Thou who patiently awaitest the stray sheep, who seekest for it so eagerly! Thou who hast said: "Come to Me all you who suffer," wilt Thou not take pity on Thy minister, on him whom Thou hast loved so tenderly? I will repel him from Me, I will vomit him out of My mouth. What has he done to kindle Thy anger against him to such an extent? Did he alter the sacred deposit of faith; did he by some scandalous crime dishonor Thy sacred sanctuary? No, but he has no zeal in My service, he is lukewarm, *quia tepidus es.*

What have been my sentiments with regard to these sacred admonitions? I was aware of them, O my God, but I gave them no thought, or if I did, I did not apply them seriously to my own case. Do I not discover in myself some sign of tepidity? If I am bound in truth to acknowledge the sad fact, how is it that these terrible threats have troubled me so little? Deplorable indeed was my blindness. But since Thou vouchsafest to warn me, I understand that Thou desirest to save me from these dreadful calamities. Such is also my determination, let the cost be what it will. Grant me, I beseech Thee, I will not say the rapturous fervor of heartfelt emotion, that source of pure delights which is a foretaste of the eternal reward which Thou often grantest to Thy good priests, grant me, O my God, the fervor of penitence, of patience, and abnegation, this is the safest of all devotions, the only one that becomes a sinner. Grant me grace to daily unite, at the altar, my own immolation to Thine, and to live henceforth in Thy presence, in that spirit of sacrifice which is the most convincing proof of sincere love.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—No one has less fear than the lukewarm priest. This is the consequence of his two-fold illusion concerning the evil which he *does* and the good which he imagines he does. The countless venial sins which he commits he considers as trifling matters, and after committing sins which injure and weaken the soul, he will soon and almost unconsciously kill it. He depends upon works, which though good in themselves, are infected with the poison of tepidity. He imagines himself to be rich, whilst

his indigence is really pitiable. He is tranquil in this sad condition, and this false security is precisely what increases its danger.

Second Point.—No one has so much reason to fear as the lukewarm priest To him apply the most dreadful warnings. "The unprofitable servant, cast into exterior darkness." What is he reproached with? His negligence. *Tot occidimus, quot ad mortem ire quotidie tepidi et tacentes videmus.* What had the foolish virgins failed to do? They had not watched. *Lampades nostrae extinguuntur.* The barren fig tree is cursed because it bears nothing but fruitless leaves. Works that are divine in themselves are yet useless, because performed negligently. "Cursed be he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully. One is cast out of the mouth of the Saviour because he is lukewarm."

MEDITATION LVI.

TEPIDITY. ITS REMEDIES.

1.—*Prayer.*
2.—*Mortification.*
3.—*Reflection.*

First Point.—Prayer. Jesus Christ teaches us that tepidity is not an incurable malady, but that from Himself alone its cure is to be expected, and that it is to be sought for in His heart. "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold, fire tried, that thou mayest be made rich, and mayest be clothed in white garments, . . . and anoint thy eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see." (Ap. iii. 18.) Our Lord both sells and gratuitously gives this efficacious remedy. "To buy of Me"; for the prayer which He requires in order to grant us the pure gold of charity is an action that is painful to the lukewarm soul; nay, it would remain impossible for him without the inspiration of grace, which prompts him to desire it.

The Saviour told the Bishop of Laodicea that he was poor, blind, and naked. Such is also the condition of every lukewarm priest. He is poor, for indeed earthly works when not ennobled by a pure intention, nor animated by fervor, are of no heavenly value. He is naked, for he has no solid virtues, and is perhaps destitute of sanctifying grace. He is blind, for he neither sees the sad state of his soul, nor the danger it is exposed to. Let him, however, purchase charity with prayer, and prayer will remedy all his evils. With it he will be rich—*ut locuples fias;* for whoever has God has everything. Charity will be a "beautiful garment"

for his soul, an "eye-salve for his eyes." *Et vestimentis albis induaris; . . . et collyrio inunge oculos tuos.* If I have charity, I am certain of pleasing Jesus Christ. He loves me, and He manifests Himself to those who love Him.

Pray, therefore, notwithstanding the reluctance to do so, and the apparent inutility of prayer. Humble yourself before God; do violence to His heart; such is His desire. After a drought of three years (an image of inveterate tepidity), Elias prayed and was not heard at once; he prays seven times, and then only does a small cloud arise from the sea, which is soon changed into an abundant rain. Persevere, and God will hear your supplication, and grant those waters of grace of which your soul has so much need.

Second Point.—Mortification. We have withdrawn from God by yielding to the inclinations of nature; we will return to Him by repressing them. In order to triumph over tepidity, one has to unite penance to prayer. There is no question here, however, of severe fasts, or rigorous austerities; a lukewarm soul is not capable of performing them. In case, however, that such a soul felt itself urged interiorly to practise some rigorous penance and that it had courage to do so, we know of nothing more profitable for it, provided it will act prudently and suffer itself to be guided; but let it at least make some slight sacrifices, let it deprive itself of some little gratifications. What is required of it is to gain some victory over itself. Give to the Lord and He will give unto you; show your good will, and He will double the measure of His graces.

Third Point.—Reflection. It may be said that reflection is the life of faith, as faith is the life of the just. Irreflection leads us to routine, and routine is scarcely distinguishable from tepidity. Let us reflect on the greatness of God: "Who is like unto God?" or the nothingness of man, the shortness of life or eternity! Let us often ask ourselves the question, *Quid hoc ad æternitatem?* Let us especially reflect on the two inappreciable blessings which result from generosity in the service of God, that is, holiness and happiness. Generosity in the service of God obtains holiness, for fervor gives much merit to all the actions which emanate from it, because God considers the heart more than the hand. Amongst the elect whom I contemplate in heaven there are many who perform only common actions, and have in a short space of time pursued a long career. They were generous and fervent. Generosity procures happiness even in this world. The yoke of Jesus Christ is sweet, not for those who painfully drag along under it, but for those who take it up and carry it lovingly. "Take My yoke upon you" (Matt. xi. 29); for piety is useful for all things, having promises for this life as well as for the life to come.

Let us believe the saints. They had the experience of it. David walks cheerfully in the way of God's commandments, which had previously frightened his weakness. "Thou hast set my feet in a spacious place." (Ps. xxx. 9.) The great apostle St. Paul superabounds with consolation in the midst of his sufferings. Thou has promised it, O my God. "To him who overcometh, I will give the hidden manna." (Ap. ii. 17.) Ah, how well this manna remains hidden to the lukewarm! If I so seldom tasted of it I am now aware of the cause. Far from overcoming my tepidity and sinful inclinations, I made myself their slave. In place of seeking for strength in the light of faith, enkindled by reflection and by the aid of Thy grace, which Thou always grantest to prayer, I avoided entering within myself; I neglected to warm my heart with the fervor of holy meditation. In showing me the cause of my evils, Thou dost, O Lord, point out to me the remedy. I will cry unto Thee with the voice of my prayer: "Out of the depths I have cried unto Thee, O Lord. I stretched forth my hands to Thee; my soul is as earth without water unto Thee." (Ps. cxlii. 6.) But whilst I crave for Thy grace, I will second it with my efforts. Thou wilt accept of my feeble sacrifices, O Lord, and by rewarding them with new graces Thou wilt help me to make other offerings less unworthy of Thy greatness.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Prayer. Jesus Christ teaches us this first remedy against tepidity. He had declared to the Bishop of Laodicea that he was poor, naked, blind. Such is the state of every lukewarm priest. Let him purchase the gold of charity with the price of prayer; it will remedy all his evils. Charity is a treasure, a rich ornament, a salve for afflicted eyes. Pray with perseverance. Do violence to the heart of God. He desires it.

Second Point.—Mortification. In order to banish tepidity from the soul, penance is to be united to prayer. Put your hand to the plow; give to God, and He will give unto you. Begin; He will do the rest. What He demands of you is a light sacrifice, a victory gained over yourself.

Third Point.—Reflection. Reflection is the life of faith, in the same manner as faith is the life of the just. Reflect on the greatness of God, His justice, His goodness; reflect upon the shortness of life; but consider particularly the two great blessings which we obtain by fervor and generosity, viz., holiness and happiness, even in this life. Fervor imparts great merit to the slightest sacrifices; God considers the heart more than the hand. The yoke of Christ

is sweet for those who carry it lovingly. "Piety is useful for all things." The saints made the experiment of this truth. Did they intend to deceive us when they spoke of the happiness they experienced in the service of God? The great apostle was filled with superabounding joy in the midst of his tribulations.

SECTION THIRD.

REMEDIES AGAINST SIN. MEDITATION ON THE LAST ENDS: DEATH, JUDGMENT, HELL.

MEDITATION LVII.

DEATH.

Sin draws us away from our end; the thought of death keeps us aloof from sin, and brings us nearer our end.

1.—*What must I Think of Death?*
2.—*What must I Think of the Fear of Death?*

First Prelude.—I go in spirit to the room of a dying man, or to the brink of a grave, and I listen to the lessons which death gives me: *Sit mors pro doctore.* (St. Aug.)

Second Prelude.—Give me grace, O my God, to understand well the solemn teachings of the grave, and to follow with docility the sure light which the thought of death bears before the mind.

First Point.—What must I think of death? Death is a passage from time to eternity—from this present life where everything vanishes to the eternal days in which nothing passes away.

I. There are four things connected with this subject which leave no room to doubt: death will surely come; it will come soon; it will separate us from all that is earthly, will deprive us of all our goods save the merit of our good works; it will seal our fate for eternity.

Death will surely come. Faith teaches it. "It is appointed for all men once to die." (Heb. ix. 27.) Reason demonstrates it, our body being of its nature corruptible. Experience proves it also; for death is an occurrence of every moment. What do we see around us? What do we hear? From every quarter there comes the news of persons dying or dead. Right and left, within our family, amongst our acquaintances, everything falls under the hand of death. O priest who have grown old in the ministry, tell us how many persons you have attended in their dying hours!

Tell us how many friends or spiritual children there are who recommend themselves to you at the Memento for the Dead! In heaven they never die—they live forever; in hell they never live—it is a continued death. On earth we live for a time, and then we die once, in order to live or to die forever.

How useful it would be for me, in humbly accepting death, which I can not avoid, often to repeat the act of my dependence on God, a most excellent and meritorious act, and the best calculated to honor the sovereign dominion of God.

Death will come soon. What is a man even in the enjoyment of the most perfect health? He is a fruit which appears beautiful on the tree, but which interiorly nourishes a worm that devours it, and will cause it to fall in a twinkling. What is life? A spark which will soon go out, a vapor which the lightest breeze has dispelled. And yet upon the strength of that light vapor, there are so many projects entertained and established.

I carry death in my bosom, and in turn it carries me within its own, as it were; for both within and without me, I must acknowledge many sources of death. No, death will not long delay. "Remember that death is not slow." (Eccle. xiv. 12.) "Between myself and death there is only one step." (1 Kings, xx. 3.) Life is naught but a prolonged struggle against death. Why food and sleep? Why the garments which protect our limbs, and a thousand other precautions of all kinds? All this is done to keep death away. Do what I will, I die every day; I die every day and every instant of the day; there is not a palpitation of my heart but is a breach made in my life and which brings me nearer my grave. Why then so much solicitude concerning this world where we are for a moment only, and so little care concerning the world to come, which we shall soon enter, and wherein we shall remain forever!

Death separates. It breaks all the ties that attach us to earth. Relations, friends, property, pleasures, all are to be left; I shall have to separate from my body itself, the object of so many cares; it will be carried into a grave, given up to worms. Time and all the means of salvation that life offers to us will be taken from us. But does not death leave us something? It leaves us our works, joy or regret, according as our works shall have been good or bad. O death, how wholesome are thy counsels! How well thou teachest us to appreciate everything at its proper value, and to regulate our affections! What a light thou throwest upon the following maxims: "It is good to adhere to the Lord." *Qui adhaeret creaturae, cadet cum labili; qui amplectitur Jesum, firmabitur in aevum.* (Im., l. ii. ch. 7.) Why, alas! did I not turn Thy lessons to better advantage!

The decisions of death are supreme. We shall die but once; such as will be our death, such will be our fate for eternity. A bad life may be repaired up to the last moment; a bad death is the most irreparable of all misfortunes. If I die in the love of God, all is saved, all is saved forever; if I die an enemy of God, all is lost to me, all is lost forever. Sisara was nailed fast by the hand of Jael in the place and attitude in which he went to sleep; thus will death place me permanently in the situation in which it will find me. If it surprises me in mortal sin, my attachment to sin will become immutable, and God's will equally unchangeable in His revenge. *Periisse semel aeternum est.* (St. Bern.) O moment of death, whereon depends eternity, wert thou always present to my thoughts, thou wouldst sanctify all the moments of my life! *O momentum, unde pendet aeternitas!*

II. Uncertainty of the circumstances of death. Death will come, it will come soon; but at what precise time? in what place? Is not this decree of my eternal destiny nearer at hand than I imagined it to be? Shall I have a few days, or at least a few hours to prepare myself for the terrible passage? Will my death be easy or violent? will it be slow or sudden? Shall I receive the helps of religion, or shall I be deprived of them? All these are the secret of God, and his only answer to our questions is: "Watch—be ready!" By concealing from me the term of my existence, He obliges me to watch over myself, to serve Him every moment of my life.

Do not sudden deaths remind us constantly of the paternal counsel of Our Lord Jesus Christ? This pastor was on his way to administer Extreme Unction; he falls on the road and he himself will be the dying man on whose person the sacred oil will be used. Another expires in the confessional; he was about to pronounce a sentence; he has heard his own; he is already judged. A third was announcing the word of God; on a sudden his voice fails him; he sinks down, and dies. Another yet, passing from one side to the other of his fireplace, has only time to say, O my God! and dies without the assistance of a brother priest! The celebrated Maldonatus put himself five times a day in the state in which he would wish to appear before the tribunal of God. He was found dead in his bed, though no indication of his approaching death had appeared. St. Liguori speaks of a priest struck dead with apoplexy at the foot of the altar, at the beginning of Mass. His last words were, "Judge me, O Lord!"

If one has real faith, how can he dare live in a condition in which he would not like to die? "Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour." Be ready. It is too late to provide against

the storm when the vessel is already carried away in its wild fury. Death will come upon us as a sudden tempest. (Prov. i. 27.) He alone is wise who keeps his soul constantly in his hands, ever ready to return it to the hands of God. "My soul is continually in my hands." (Ps. cxviii. 109.)

Second Point.—What should I think of the fear of death? It is with reason we fear death; but this fear should be reasonable and moderate. Death is the punishment of original prevarication; hence comes that wholesome horror with which we repel it. The evil does not consist in fearing death, since this fear is innate in us, and abides in us as a memorial of our primitive immortality. The great evil is to fear death more than sin; or rather to love sin whilst the mere thought of death makes us tremble. "O blindness!" says Bossuet, "if it be an evil for the body to have lost its soul, is it not by far worse for the soul to have lost its God? . . . And if we are horrified at the sight of a corpse lying on the ground deprived of motion and of life, is it not more horrible still to consider a human soul become a spiritual corpse, and a living grave to itself, and being separated from God by sin? *Una res est pertimescenda, peccatum.* (St. Chrys.) *Non mori, sed male mori malum est.* Separated from death, sin is in itself the greatest of all evils; united to death, sin is the consummation of all evils; but what is death without sin, in the light of faith? O my God, let death be our lot, but keep away sin. "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, have mercy on us."

Take at this moment the resolutions you would like to have taken and faithfully accomplished at the supreme hour that will soon decide your fate. Address yourself to Mary, the patroness of a happy death; and when you recite the *Ave Maria*, emphasize particularly the words: *Nunc et in hora mortis.* Address yourself to Jesus dying for you on Calvary; unite your death to His death, and attentively recite the prayer *Anima Christi.* Address yourself to God the Father, begging of Him through the merits of Jesus Christ to grant you the grace which will crown all the others, namely, the grace of dying in His love! *Pater noster.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What must I think of death? It is a passage from time to eternity. Many things about it are certain and many uncertain.

I. It will come, it will come soon; it will strip us of everything; it will settle our fate forever. It can not be escaped. Faith teaches it; reason and experience demonstrate it. What do we see, what

do we hear? I see on all sides the spectacle of death; from every quarter I hear the announcements of death. It will come soon. What is life? A spark about to die and a light vapor blown away. Every pulsation of my heart is a rent in my life. It strips us of everything save our works, with a feeling of joy or regret accordingly as they were good or evil. To attach ourselves to God, this is the point. O death, why did I not follow thy teachings more faithfully? It settles everything. We die once only; such as will be our death such will be our eternal fate.

II. I know that death will come; that it will come soon. At what time will it come? Under what circumstances? Will it be fearful or violent, slow or sudden? God answers. "Watch and pray." Nothing so common as sudden deaths. Let us be always ready.

Second Point.—What must I think of the fear of death? It is a just fear, but it ought to be reasonable and moderate. In truth one thing alone is to be feared—sin. The great evil is to fear death more than sin. What resolutions should we like to have taken and accomplished at the moment of death? Let us take them now, and begin at once to fulfil them.

MEDITATION LVIII.

THE APPROACHES OF DEATH. APPLICATION OF THE SENSES.

1.—*Application of the Sight.*
2.—*Application of the Hearing.*
3.—*Application of the Taste.*
4.—*Application of the Touch.*

One of the reasons why we derive so little benefit from our meditation on death is because we consider death in others, not in ourselves. Now, the great grace of never falling into sin has been promised by the Holy Ghost to him alone who remembers his own death. "Remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccl. vii. 40.) Let us therefore place before our eyes the probable circumstances of our death, and apply our senses to them.

Preludes as in the preceding meditation.

First Point.—Application of the sight. Cast your eyes (1) around upon your apartment. You will soon leave it in order to enter the house of your eternity. (Eccl. xii. 5.) (2) Upon its furniture, more or less conformable to the poverty of Jesus Christ. Upon those books, from which you should have obtained both

ecclesiastical science and the science of piety; upon your crucifix, the most precious of all books. It was by studying this book that the saints obtained the science of the elect. What do you read in this book, especially at this hour? What do all these objects remind you of? Do they not recall to your mind the neglect of the duties of your state, sins of many kinds, omissions? God is willing, even now, to forgive everything if you are penitent. (3) Look at your bed; it is the altar upon which you are about to offer your last sacrifice, and where is the victim? Its immolation will soon be over. (4) Consider the persons who assist or stand around you. Some of these weep, others show no emotion; they retire after bidding you farewell, or draw near your bed to make the final adieu. Here are your brother priests, . . . the director of your conscience, who turns all your thoughts toward eternity, suggests pious sentiments. . . . Behold your guardian angel, more solicitous than ever, who defends, encourages you, urges you to turn to advantage these last moments of your life, every one of which may deserve for you eternal happiness. You are still on the way, but for a moment only. See the demon who attacks you with greater fury, knowing that very soon he will have no more power over you.

Second Point.—Application of the hearing. Hear the monotonous tick of the pendulum. Its every motion teaches you that you draw a second nearer to the tribunal of God. Hear the words that are said in a low tone of voice around you, the sound of your hard breathing, the rattle in your throat, that harbinger of death; the sound of the bells announcing your agony, the prayers half stifled by sobs. They now offer for you the supplications you used to offer for other dying persons. *Sancta Maria, ora pro eo. . . . Omnes sancti et Sanctae Dei, intercedite pro eo. . . . A mala morte, a poenis inferni, a potestate diaboli, libera eum Domine. . . .* Hear the recommendation of the soul, so full of comfort for the good priest, so full of terror for the bad one. *Proficiscere, anima christiana, de hoc mundo.* This is true indeed; for you the world is over. *Commendo te omnipotenti Deo,* words truly terrifying for the unfaithful minister. He is given up to the justice of God, an angry and almighty God! But how delightful for the fervent priest to hear the Church on earth, grateful for his works of zeal, imploring in his behalf the aid of the Church triumphant in heaven! How delightful again to hear: *Egredienti animae tuae de corpore splendidus Angelorum coetus occurrat; judex Apostolorum tibi senatus adveniat; candidatorum tibi Martyrum triumphator exercitus obviet, liliata rutilantium te Confessorum turma circumdet; jubilantium te Virginum chorus excipiat.* How sweet are the following words: *Mitis atque festivus Christi Jesu tibi aspectus appareat?*

Third Point.—Application of the taste. Imagine that you presently experience all the bitterness of soul connected with the agony of a man who had loved the world, and all that passes with the world. "Doth bitter death separate in this manner?" (1 Kings, xv. 32.) But particularly the bitterness that fills the last moments of a priest who has been unfaithful to his admirable vocation. Remember, also, the sweetness connected with the remembrance of a sacerdotal life spent in loving Jesus Christ, and causing Him to be known and loved by others. Feel the sadness, the regrets, the fears of the one; the calm, the joy, the hopes of the other.

Fourth Point.—Application of the touch. Imagine that you hold in your feeble hands the image of Jesus Christ, the crucified; that you apply it to your lips; that you touch your own body, from which life is departing, and which in a few moments will be nothing but a corpse; that your hands come in contact with your emaciated arms, which are fast becoming stiff; with your face, covered with a cold sweat; with your heart, which has almost ceased to beat.

In such a state you saw some of your parishoners, some brother priests. In the same state you shall soon be seen by others. Make on this day, in the interest of your soul, the reflections which the sight of your agony will soon suggest to those who will witness it. Turn to your spiritual advantage this decree, in which mercy is united to justice: "Thou shalt die the death." Since the day of our degradation by sin, and in the happy state in which Our Saviour's goodness has replaced us, oh, how advantageous for us it is to die! What does it matter that death is necessary, if through our dispositions we can make it voluntary, and infinitely meritorious! Let us accept it with all its circumstances, such as divine Providence ordains it.

O my God, since Thou willest it, I will it also; notwithstanding all the reluctance of my nature I consent to receive death at Thy hands, and I freely submit to the decree which condemns me to it. I submit to it as a rational creature. Art not Thou the Master of all things? Can not He who has made the vessel of clay dispose of it as He wills? I submit to it as a sinner; I am content to comply with that penance which Thou hast imposed on me. Strike me as a criminal, but forgive my repenting heart. I submit to it as a Christian. My Saviour died: I also will die. He died for me; I will die for Him. The Master, the King, the true God dies for His slave; the slave in his turn must feel happy to be able by dying to obey his Master, to please his King, to resemble his God. As a priest I submit to death. As such I am bound, O my Lord, to

glorify Thee much more perfectly than the simple Christian. Alas! I daily offend Thee! Let death come, since it alone can free me from the danger of displeasing Thee, since it enables me to offer to Thee the most complete sacrifice of myself. By dying I will render homage to Thy eternal life, and my very bones, in the lowly humility of their grave, will in their own way celebrate Thy infinite greatness. "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like to Thee?" (Ps. xxxiv. 10.) With David I will say, that I will soon "wither up like grass"; that I am about to pass "away like the shadow," and to "disappear like smoke"; but that "Thou, O Lord, art always the self-same," and that "Thy years will not fail." I will say with St. Paul that the "time of my immolation is nigh," but that all my hope is in Thee, "O King immortal, to whom alone honor and glory are due forevermore." (1 Tim. i. 17.)

Recite slowly the prayer *Anima Christi.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Application of the sight. Cast your eyes upon your apartment. You are about to leave it, and to enter the house of your eternity. Upon your furniture, your books, your crucifix. What do those objects recall to your mind? Upon your bed. It is the altar of your last sacrifice. Where is the victim? Upon the persons who come in or go out, who draw near or move away from you. Here are your brother priests, the guide of your conscience. See your good angel, more solicitous than ever concerning your salvation; the devil animated with great fury.

Second Point.—Application of the hearing. Hear the monotonous tick of the pendulum. The words that are spoken around you, the sound of your labored breathing, the prayers that are recited. "Holy Mary, pray for him." Meditate on the recommendation of a departing soul, so consoling to the good priest. How rejoiced he is to hear the Church on earth invoke in his behalf the assistance of all the members of the Church in heaven.

Third Point.—Application of the taste. Ah, how much bitterness there is in the heart of the lukewarm, during those last struggles of nature, when the suffering of a troubled soul are added to those of the body overcome by disease! How delightful for the holy priest is the remembrance of a life entirely spent in loving God, and causing Him to be loved!

Fourth Point.—Application of the touch. Hold the crucifix in your decrepit hands; approach your lips to it when they present it to you. . . Your own body, from which life is departing. Put your hand upon your face, moist with a cold sweat; upon your heart,

which will soon have ceased to beat. Make on this day the wholesome reflections which the sight of your agony will suggest to others.

MEDITATION LIX.

THE DEATH OF THE GOOD PRIEST.

1.—*What he Sees in the Past.*
2.—*What he Feels in the Present.*
3.—*What he Hopes for in the Future.*

First Prelude.—Imagine that you are present at the death of a fervent priest, and that you behold on his countenance, as it were, a reflection of the serenity of his soul.

Second Prelude.—Beg for the grace of at last beginning, and of continuing to the end, that holy life which will be rewarded by a happy death.

First Point.—What does the dying priest see in the past? Sufferings, of which there remain nothing now but a sweet remembrance. It may be said of the good priest, at least to a great extent, that his life, like that of his Master, was a continual cross and martyrdom. Many were the works he undertook; many the contradictions which he suffered for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. He bore in his heart the infirmities of all his people. "Who is weak, and I am not weak?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) He may apply to himself the words of Jacob, speaking of his flock: "Day and night was I parched with heat and with frost; and sleep departed from my eyes." (Gen. xxxi. 40.) His intentions were perhaps misunderstood and misrepresented, and he may have received outrages in return for blessings.

But now his career is at an end. What does he now think of all he suffered in so noble a cause? His labors, his persecutions are now things of the past. The feelings of reluctance which he overcame in order to visit the sick, to admonish or encourage many sinners, the violence he did himself in order to obey his conscience, privations, anxieties, trials of all kinds, all those things are now over. How well for him that he did not look for the small gratifications of self-love, the pleasure of the senses, the comforts of an easy life. These, also, would now be over, and of what use would they be? He sowed in tears. "Going they went and wept, casting their seeds." (Ps. cxxxv.) He knows that he has before him many meritorious works, and he reaps in joy. "But coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves." (Ib.) For

whilst the time of labor is over, the fruit of his works remains. "From henceforth now, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, for their works follow them." (Ap. xiv. 13.) When we are frightened or wearied by the trials of our sacerdotal life, let us think of death in connection with them.

Second Point.—What does the dying holy priest feel in the present? His soul is that faithful Jerusalem to which God promised the most abundant benedictions of peace. "I will bring upon her, as it were, a river of peace." (Is. lxvi. 12.) The testimony of his conscience fills him with consolation in his dying hour. He had sought God in the simplicity of his soul and had applied himself to do naught that might bring remorse at the moment of his death. He had, however, committed sin; and where is the man who never sinned? But he had cleansed himself of those faults in the blood of Jesus Christ and by his own tears. God forgave them; and as a pledge of this pardon he loaded him with new favors; those very faults, through the merciful providence of God, became for him a means of advancing in virtue; for the remembrance of them led him to despise himself, to feel compassion for sinners, to practise patience, zeal, gratitude. . . God, God all merciful loved me, notwithstanding all the reasons He had to hate me; I would love Him less had I not offended Him so much. . . O my soul, enter thou into thy rest, give thyself up to feelings of peace, whilst thou recallest to mind the blessings of the Lord. "Turn, O my soul, into thy rest; for the Lord has been bountiful to thee." (Ps. cxiv. 7.) When he thinks of the good he may have done during his life, he acknowledges it to be due to the grace of God, without which he could do nothing. "Through the grace of God, I am what I am." In spending himself in the service of God, and of souls, he merely accomplished a duty, and he puts himself in the ranks of the unprofitable servant. "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do." (Luc. xvii. 10.) But with all this, how sweet it is for him to hear his conscience bear testimony that the grace of God "was not void in him." He already hears within his soul the whispering of the words of Christ: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." When I placed you in the ranks of My ministers I told you of sufferings and of tears. "You shall lament and weep." (Joan. xvi. 50.) But I was also careful to comfort you with the knowledge that joy would one day succeed sorrow, and that no one henceforth would disturb your happiness. "I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you." (Ibid.) I have come to fulfil my promise. Come forth from thy prison, My well-beloved soul, masterpiece of My grace, instrument of My

mercy! Thou hast shared My trials; the time has come to make thee partaker in the glory of My kingdom.

What shall we say of the sight of the crucifix, of the prayers that the Church offers for him, but especially of the presence of Jesus Christ, who will be his viaticum in his journey to eternity! He enjoys profound peace. "In peace, in the selfsame, I will sleep and I will rest; for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope." (Ps. iv. 9, 10.)

Third Point.—What he hopes for in the future. Whilst at the hour of death the presumption of sinners is often changed to frightful despair, the pious fear of the just is generally replaced by the sweetest confidence. The fervent priest had feared God too much when he acted as the dispensator of His mysteries to fear Him now when about to give an account of his stewardship. Should some slight trouble, however, arise in his soul, he feels confident in thinking, like St. Teresa, that he is to be judged by Him whom he loved above all. He says, like St. Paul, "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day." (2 Tim. i. 12.)

Ah! how good it is to die when life is spent in loving God, and causing Him to be loved!

Blessed is the death whose approach causes no apprehension, and puts an end to every alarm! What dependence can we place upon ourselves during life? It is so easy to fail in some of the obligations of the priesthood! The more a priest is advanced in virtue, the more he fears to offend God! How painful it is, O my God, to love Thee, and yet see one's self exposed to the danger of displeasing Thee! *Da amantem, et sentit quod dico.* Come, O death, and destroy in me the body of sin, with the causes and consequences of sin! Death is coming to thee, O good priest, and by closing the past, which was full of bitterness and of dangers, it opens to thee the most delightful future; an eternity of triumph, delights more inebriating than those of the other saints, a more eminent rank in the kingdom of God, a higher throne, a choicer heaven! O Thou inexhaustible source of light and of life. "I shall then be filled, when Thy glory will appear!" (Ps. xvi. 12.)

The desire to die the death of holy priests should decide me to live as they do. How is it with me in that respect? Colloquies with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, asking them for the grace of a happy death.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What the good priest at the hour of death sees in the past. Suffering of which nothing remains save a sweet remem-

brance. His life was a continual cross and martyrdom. But now the end of his career has come. What now remains of the labors, of the hardships, of the journey? What of all his troubles, his combats, his trials of all kinds? All these are passed. O my God, how well it was for me not to have loved the world, not to have pampered my flesh, and to have attached myself to Thee! I have labored; behold the end of the day! I will now rest in peace! I have sowed in tears, I will reap in joy. Blessed afflictions and trials! How sweet are the memories you have left in my soul!

Second Point.—What he feels in the present. The testimony of his conscience fills him with consolation. He has sought God in the simplicity of his heart, and has applied himself to do nothing that he might regret at the hour of death. He had sinned, however; but he had wept for his sins, and washed them away in the blood of Jesus Christ. Yet how sweet to hear his conscience tell him that the grace of God was not void in him!.. What of the sight of the crucifix, of the prayers of the Church, of the coming of Jesus Christ, who will be his viaticum?

Third Point.—What he hopes for in the future. The pious timidity of the just is generally replaced by confidence. The good priest can say: "I know whom I have believed." . "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) Ah, how good for the priest to die, when he has lived in loving God alone, and causing Him to be loved! The desire to die as the saints did should determine me to live as they did.

MEDITATION LX.

THE TEPID PRIEST ON HIS DEATH-BED.

1.—*Sad Separations.*
2.—*Bitter Remembrances.*
3.—*Dread Forebodings.*

In the soul of the tepid priest there is nothing but darkness and illusion; but at the approach of death, which we may call the dawn of the eternal day, all illusions pass away. The "sinner will see"; alas, what will he see? Around him objects that he has loved to excess, and from which he must now separate; behind him a life short indeed, but very precious, which he should have filled with

good works, and wherein he perhaps sees none but useless or criminal actions; before him he sees eternity, and at its portal the tribunal of the dread Judge.

First Point.—Sad separations. The human heart must necessarily adhere either to God or to creatures. This priest who so often had said to his people, *Sursum corda*, has suffered his heart to adhere to merely earthly or human affections. He loved his relatives, not in order to sanctify or save them, but in order to procure their temporal welfare, at the risk of losing his soul and theirs as well. How many times did they not interfere with his ministry! How many sins did he not commit on their account! He loved money. He who represented Jesus Christ, the poor of Bethlehem, so poor that He had not whereon to lay His head; he the preacher of a Gospel which forbids solicitude for the morrow, had amassed savings which perhaps were a subject of scandal to others, and for himself a cause of a thousand sinful distractions. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart also be." (Luc. xii. 34.) He loved his dwelling-house, had spent so much care in making it beautiful and comfortable. He was fond of reunions, of feastings, of a sensual life!.. Death snaps asunder all those ties. O death, if the thought of thee is already so troublesome to him who has set his peace in the goods of this world, what will be thy presence to the dying sinner! "O death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions!" (Eccle. xli. 1.)

Second Point.—Bitter remembrances. The end of his life has come! Ah, how short it now seems to have been! He recalls to mind all the opportunities he had to do good; the treasure of merits which he might easily have amassed... So many favorable circumstances; so many good works which might have filled every moment of his life, so many ordinary actions which he could have raised to the rank of the most perfect by the sanctity of his intentions!.. And all I had to do was to overcome myself during that small number of years, during those few days of life! By sufferings so light and so short, I could have opened for myself an entrance to the house of eternal bliss, and I have preferred to make them the way to a death full of anguish,.. perhaps, alas, to the place of eternal torments! Where was my reason? Where the love of myself? Oh, miserable tepidity, criminal sensualities!

He remembers the evil that he has done. What does he think of it now? An unwelcome light dawns upon his soul. Thousands of doubts which he had treated as so many scruples appear to him under quite a serious aspect. He now discovers crimes where he thought there was only negligence. Everything becomes dark to him when he recalls to mind many hasty decisions, sacraments

denied, or granted without discrimination, the sick and the dying whom he visited so rarely and attended with so much negligence; his recitations of the Office, the celebration of Masses, the sacred ceremonies which were performed with inattention, irreverence, routine, and perhaps profanation. . . . Of all this he had not thought; he had forgotten all about the greatness of God, the sanctity of the priesthood, the gravity and extent of his obligations. Now he remembers these things. "I now remember." I now remember the sacred engagements I had contracted with the Lord, the favors with which He had loaded me, the ingratitude which was all my return for His blessings! I now remember so many charitable admonitions that I received, so many instances in which I repelled the solicitations of grace, o many outrages against my Lord! And I was living in a state of life that had the glory of God for its sole object; I was separated from the world, consecrated to the service of the altar, raised to the rank of ambassador of Jesus Christ. It was in Jerusalem itself that I sinned; I committed evil in the house of God, in his sanctuary, "in the land of the saints." "I now remember the evils which I did in Jerusalem." (1 Mach. vi. 12.)

Third Point.—Dread forebodings. Soon, very soon, his dwelling will be assigned to him, in either of the two eternities. In which of the two? He questions his conscience. . . . O eternity! He sounds thy abysses! Will he suffer in hell as long as the good priest will rejoice in heaven? . . . How distressing the thought! No one knows whether he be worthy of love or of hatred! The good priest is led on to hope by the words of Scripture: "I love those who love Me." (Prov. viii. 17.)

But for the tepid priest such words are an additional motive of terror. How anxious he is to foresee the result of the judgment he must now undergo! How shall I be received by the adorable Master whom I served so badly? Will He say to me also: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant?" How shall I answer the dreadful summons· "Give an account of thy stewardship?" We see him now overwhelmed with terror. Behold him about to face his Judge; in a moment he will know his fate. . . . Ah, if he could retrace his steps! But no, his intense desires of life are all in vain. The decree has gone forth. He must die—immediately. If at least he could only remain here! No, no, he must pass on. *Manere satagit, ire compellitur.* (St. Laur. Just.)

Religion, however, that has consolations for all those who suffer, will not deny them to her minister. A devoted brother priest comes and endeavors to comfort him in his anguish, by speaking to him of the mercies of God. He shows him the crucifix, applies it to his lips, places it on his heart. In the name of

God he offers him the pardon of his sins, countless and enormous as they may be, provided he repents. But if after a long life of criminal presumption, this unfortunate man will deny himself the consolation of hope? The words of absolution are pronounced over him—but if this confession was without compunction, as the former ones were? They tell him that Jesus Christ will come and strengthen him with His divine presence—but if he should receive the viaticum with no other dispositions than those he used to bring to the daily reception of communion at the altar? The Church will intercede in her tender solicitude for her dying minister, invoke for him the help of all the saints of heaven; she will anoint his body with the sacred unction, exhort his soul to leave this world for a better one—alas, all these touching ceremonies, all these prayers and exhortations so consoling to the good priest, may have quite a contrary effect on him who has lived in a state of constant tepidity!

Be not one of those priests who have no prudence except for others; who preach with all truth that a good death makes up the sum of all the interests of man, and who prepare for themselves an ending full of anxiety and anguish.

With the aid of Thy grace, O my God, I will shake off the yoke of my tepidity. It is my intention that henceforth each moment of my life shall be an expiation for the past, a motive of confidence for my last hour; confidence will then be for me so necessary and also so sweet! *Maria, mater gratiae, mater misericordiae, tu nos ab hoste protege, et mortis hora suscipe.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Distressing separations. The human heart is never without affection: it adheres to creatures if it does not adhere to God. One does not leave without regret what he has loved to excess. If the mere thought of death be so troublesome to the lovers of this world's goods, what will its presence be to the tepid priest?

Second Point.—Bitter remembrances. At death the tepid priest remembers all the facilities and opportunities he had to do good: all I had to do was to overcome myself during the time of my short life. He remembers the evil that he has done, and he judges of it differently now from what he did during the course of his thoughtless life! A terrible light bursts upon his soul. He sees crimes in those acts which he flattered himself to be mere acts of negligence. *Nunc reminiscor.*

Third Point.—Dread forebodings. His dwelling-place will soon be assigned him, in either of the two eternities. In which of the two? He consults his conscience; what can it answer him? "Every one will receive according to his works." A brother priest comes in haste to visit him; he endeavors to comfort him in his distress; holds up to him the crucifix, promises pardon to him, anoints his senses with the sacred unction, exhorts him to depart for a better world. All these ceremonies, exhortations are very consoling to the good priest at his death. Alas! when the tepid priest must leave this world, they may have for him quite a contrary effect.

MEDITATION LXI.

HOW TO PREPARE OURSELVES FOR DEATH.

1.—*Do Now what perhaps you will not be Able to do at Death.*

2.—*Do Now what will necessarily have to be done at Death.*

3.—*Do Now what you will Like to have done at Death.*

First Prelude.—Become as perfectly recollected as possible; imagine that your good angel comes to say to you, as the prophet said to Ezechias: "Set order to thy house, for thou shalt die and not live." (Is. xxxviii. 1.)

Second Prelude.—Thou ceasest not in Thy mercy, O my Lord, to warn me to be ever ready to appear before Thee. Do Thou Thyself prepare me and teach me how to respond to Thy grace whilst making this preparation.

First Point.—Do now what you may not be able to do at death. On learning that our last hour is near at hand, the first thing that will strike our mind will be the scene of our life, such as we really spent it. The evil of it will then appear in quite a different light from what it now appears. My conduct is now praised by the world, because of its regularity, but at death my conscience will perhaps convince me that all my life was spent in endeavoring to avoid pain and gratify my sensuality.

Serious doubts will then arise concerning a thousand things that had never disturbed me, because I failed to reflect upon such matters. Had not charity been banished from my heart by those secret aversions which I bore in my bosom, even to the altar? Was not there a suspicion of avarice connected with the savings which I qualified as my wise precautions? Will the remembrance of my penances bring back peace to my mind? What about my hasty confessions, my rash determinations? All these retrospec-

tive considerations will be so many subjects of alarm to the priest who has only a few hours to prepare for death. How great will be their terror for him who at the time of death has merely time to realize that he is dying!

They will then feel the necessity of reviewing in detail their whole life! But, alas, time is wanting! The mind is not free.. Everything that is required for the proper performance of so important a task is wanting. I must, therefore, if I desire my salvation, regulate the affairs of my spiritual life in order that my conscience may have nothing to reproach me with at that terrible hour; there should be no negligence in my examinations, no want of sincerity in my sorrow, no tepidity in my penance. Take time every day for two or three days to excite yourself to true contrition, and ask for it earnestly; go then and make a good confession *corde magno et animo valenti;* regulate your temporal affairs so that at the approach of death they may not disturb your mind. The last hours of life are so precious! They should be so carefully employed in securing salvation, shortening the pains of purgatory, making our crown more glorious. For him who has thus in advance placed his household in order, the last hours of life are the time of the richest harvest.

As soon as he is informed that he is about to die, he can say without anxiety: "O my God, I have now only a few moments left to believe in Thee, to hope in Thee, to suffer for Thee. Death will soon deprive me of every faculty of knowing Thee, of loving Thee freely and meritoriously. I will at least, with my last breath, apply myself to honor and love Thee with all my strength. O my soul, let us turn to good account the time that is left to us! Let us strive, if possible, during the rest of this life to love God as much as all the saints loved Him during their lives! Let us do within the next twenty-four hours more than we have done during the last sixty years. Let us bear all these sufferings with the cheerfulness of the martyrs. Let us meet death with resignation and joy. I wish, O my God, I had a thousand lives to offer up; I would cheerfully sacrifice them for Thee. Thou dost now demand of me the one Thou hast given Thy servant; behold I return it to Thee, O my Lord! I am content to be stripped of all that I loved on earth; and of this body which I loved to excess. I submit to the law which will give it to the worms, and return it to dust. As to the pains which I experience, they are all too light and too short, since they will be the last evidence of my love for Thee. I beg of Thee, O all-merciful God, to have pity on me; yet I submit to the pains which I shall have deserved to suffer in purgatory. Why was I not less deserving of them? I return Thee thanks for

all the blessings Thou hast granted me, but more particularly for the invaluable gift of faith. I do, O my God, firmly believe all that the Church teaches; I humbly hope for all it promises. I sincerely regret having so unfaithfully served the best and most amiable of masters; but all my crimes will not shake my confidence. This confidence I ground upon the infinite merits of my Saviour; for in the midst of my sad remembrances I can exclaim with joy, Jesus Christ belongs to me, He is mine; Thou gavest Him to me, O Lord, and He also gave Himself, His life, His death, His penances, His virtues. Such is the treasure of merits which I offer Thee to supplement my deficiencies."

In order to be able to entertain these sentiments at the gate of eternity, we should have often entertained them during life. It is therefore an excellent practice, followed by many good priests, to select one day every month in order to prepare one's self for death, and to renew the acts indicated above with the same fervor as if death were to follow immediately.

Second Point.—Do now what will have necessarily to be done at death. Let us voluntarily and by a meritorious sacrifice now leave what would then have to be left against our will and without merit. What a shame if we oblige almighty God to deprive us violently of that which He asks of us as a father, and which He would have us offer Him out of love! St. Paul said to the Corinthians: "You are dead, and your life is hid with Jesus Christ in God." He knew that those new Christians had renounced all their carnal or earthly affections. If they were still possessed of some goods, their hearts were free from attachments to them, and they had buried in the waters of Baptism the bad habits to which they had been addicted hitherto. Blessed are the priests who have nothing more to abandon when the Master calls them! For them all is in order, all is ready; they have bid adieu to all earthly things. Oh! how calm and sweet the death which has been so well prepared for, so piously anticipated.

When we undertake the great work of spiritual death, there is less to be done in disengaging ourselves from exterior objects than in overcoming or regulating our inclinations. One may die to the actual possession or enjoyment of riches, honors, and pleasures, and continue to live for one's self. Meditation, attention to the presence of God, the mortification of our senses, the taking up in earnest of the cross of Jesus Christ, are the means of arriving at this spiritual death, "all alive, all life giving in the life of Our Lord. (St. Fr. de Sales.) Begin to practise this evangelical detachment by treating the body with less tenderness as to food and clothing. By loving retirement, harboring less anxiety concerning the success of tem-

poral affairs, frequently offering to God that for which we have the greatest love, praying Him to dispose of it according to His will; by abandoning oneself to the care of Providence, whenever it will permit us to be tried by contradictions, sickness, humiliations. We thus accustom ourselves to say with the Apostles, "I die every day." I die every day not simply because I daily draw nearer to my end, but because I daily feel my attachment to life grow weaker. I now care less for the esteem or the blame of men. My heart is detached from all worldly things, and my soul begins, as it were, to separate from my body. Such was ever, O my God, the life of Thy good priests, a life of death, a continual sacrifice; and when they appeared before Thee there was no love in their heart save for Thee alone.

Third Point.—Do now what you will certainly like to have done at the moment of your death. The greatest trouble of the dying man consists in the consciousness of the bad use he has made of life; for he fully comprehends that it was granted him for the sole purpose of gaining heaven. When he has neglected a matter of such capital moment he feels all the terror of the sentence: *Jam non poteris villicare.* "Thou canst be steward no longer." (Luc. xvi. 2.) No more talents will henceforth be placed at your disposal. As long as you had life you could amass merits; this is no longer in your power. What you have you shall have throughout eternity; to it you can add nothing. Hitherto your arms remain inactive; they will now be loaded with chains. What shame, what bitter regrets!

When I shall appear before God, there shall also appear with me fervent Christians whose days were filled with works of sanctity; there will appear before His tribunal faithful pastors, zealous missionaries, accompanied by numerous souls whom they had rescued from the hands of Satan. . .. They will offer to Jesus Christ their fatigue, their apostolic labors, all the good they shall have done. . What shall I offer Him? Shall I offer him my prayers so cold and heartless, my Masses celebrated with so little fervor, all my priestly functions performed with to much tepidity? . . . O my soul, let us prevent a misfortune so truly irreparable. Let us live and continue to live to the end like devoted ministers of Jesus Christ. Whatever may be the amount of good works performed by us, we will at the moment of death desire to have performed a great many more.

Regulate now so wisely the balance of your days; take now such strong resolutions, that you may remember this day on your death-bed as the beginning for you of a truly sacerdotal life. Determine the day of the month on which you will make your spiritual

retreat, and during which you will with great fervor make your exercises of preparation for death. Receive communion on that day as if it were your viaticum. Celebrate Mass to-day as if it were the last of your life.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Do now what you may not be able to do at the moment of death. At the approach of death things appear different from what they seem during life. Priests feel at that moment great anxiety concerning many points which had given but little trouble during life. They may find it necessary to review the entire past. Time will be wanting; the mind will not be free. I must therefore so regulate my conscience that it may have then no serious reproach to make. The last hours of life are so precious. Let us so wisely settle our temporal affairs that they may not encroach upon our time in our dying hours.

Second Point.—Do now what shall necessarily have to be done at the time of death. Let us now gain merit by abandoning those things which would then have to be left necessarily and without merit. Let us live as if we were already dead; let us possess as if not possessing. Blessed is the priest who has nothing more to sacrifice when the sovereign Judge calls him! Let us generously practise apostolic detachment. Let us enable ourselves to say with St. Paul: "I die every day," because I see every day my attachment to life and to earth becoming weaker.

Third Point.—Do now what you will certainly like to have done when you shall have to die. The greatest trouble of the dying man consists in the consciousness of the bad use he has made of time. O my soul, let us live now and continue to live in the manner we will ardently desire to have lived at the moment of death. Whatsoever may be the amount of good works performed by us, we will at the moment of death desire to have performed a great many more.

MEDITATION LXII.

THE HABITUAL REMEMBRANCE OF DEATH AN INFALLIBLE MEANS OF OBTAINING A HOLY DEATH.

1.—*The Habitual Remembrance of Death Secures Innocence of Life.*
2.—*It Detaches from all Perishable Things.*
3.—*It Enables us to Die with the Heart Full of the Sweetest Confidence.*

There are three things which make the day of the good priest's death a day of joy and triumph: innocence of life; purity of heart, excluding all affections for everything that is not God; and a firm confidence, a result of the good works with which his life was replete. Now, the mere remembrance of death, if we are faithful to the graces which accompany it, will suffice to enrich us with these three invaluable blessings.

First Point.—The habitual remembrance of death secures innocence of life, both by preserving us from committing sin, and by promptly withdrawing us from it after it has been committed.

I. He who reflects on death does not sin. Faith itself teaches us this truth. "Remember thy last ends, and thou shalt never sin." (Eccle. vii. 40.) Who ever heard of a promise more consoling? In its certainty. God He is who speaks—shall I refuse to believe? "A faithful word worthy to be accepted." In its extent; what does the Spirit of Truth promise? That by means of this remembrance—*memorare*—I will avoid not only some sins, but all sins, and forever, whatever may be the violence and duration of temptation. *In aeternum non peccabis.* In the infinite advantages of the victory which is promised; for when preserved from sin I am preserved from all that is real evil. There is no longer any obstacle either to my present or to my future happiness. In the easy use of the means which are given. Rather than offend Thee, O my God, I should be ready to undertake, to suffer, to sacrifice everything; but what dost Thou here demand of me? A remembrance, O my God! In order to be pleasing to Thee, to be pure, to be holy, to be happy here and hereafter, all I need is a remembrance—*memorare;* and this remembrance is, as it were, unavoidable for a pastor who is so often in the presence of death; and of this subject every object seems to remind me, nay, even the very color of my saintly habit. Ah, my God, how truly did Thy prophet speak when he said that salvation cost Thy elect nothing! "For nothing shalt Thou save them." (Ps. lv. 8.)

Reason confirms on this point the teachings of faith. There are two sovereign passions which set all the others in motion, and are the origin of every sin, namely, pride and sensuality. Pride is confounded by the consideration of the greatness of God, and of our own nothingness; of His supreme authority, and of our absolute dependence upon Him; now, we become more deeply convinced of these truths by the thought of death than by any other consideration. It is when standing before the tomb of a great king that we feel particularly inclined to exclaim, "God alone is great." (Massilon); and every feeling of rebellion is silenced at the remem branch of that irresistible power, to which all human flesh must give homage by falling powerless at its feet. "All flesh shall come to Thee." (Ps. lxiv. 3.) As to sensuality, nothing represses it so efficaciously as the actual remembrance of the near dissolution of our body, and the sure hope of its blessed immortality, if we love it only as we should love it. Behold how our passions are conquered, how sin is avoided. We fall miserably when we forget death; we rise when we remember it.

II. Whoever thinks of death will not persevere in sin. Heavy is his burden whose guilty conscience whispers to him: God owes the blessing of life to no man, much less to him who is His enemy; I, alas, am His enemy, since I have violated His law. Each moment may be the last of my life; do I not often hear of sudden deaths? If the great God at this moment refused to prolong my existence, if He were pleased to discontinue the beating of my heart, I would fall lifeless. My body upon this earth. . . Whither would my soul go? . . The thought of it terrifies me! How can I retire to rest with the consciousness of the frightful state of my soul? How do I dare defer a penance which would save me to-day? Alas! that penance I may have to begin in hell to-morrow. . Reflections such as these must be efficacious. It is true, therefore, that the remembrance of death preserves innocence, or restores it promptly.

Second Point.—The remembrance of death detaches from all perishable things, and leaves the heart free to unite itself intimately with God. *Facile contemnit omnia*, says St. Gregory, *qui semper se cogitat moriturum.* There is so much light shed around this remembrance of death! It points so strikingly to the nothingness of the things of earth! By snatching from the face of the world the deceitful veil which covers it, and showing it to us such as it is, death cries to us louder than Solomon, "Vanity of vanities!" There is nothing but vanity under the sun. Vanity of riches! What can they do to make us happy? How long can we retain their possession? What portion of them remains to the

dying man? Vanity of honors, reputation. Who will care for me after my demise? I shall be forgotten like those who died before me, and were I judged favorably by men after my death, what benefit is their judgment if condemned at the tribunal of God! *Laudantur ubi non sunt, cruciantur ubi sunt.* (St. Aug.) Vanity of pleasures. How rapidly they pass away! What do they leave behind them? Ah! how much greater the comfort I would experience after a life of privations and apostolic sufferings! Vanity of human friendships. Death teaches me that they are deceitful and inconstant. *Dilectio creaturae fallax et instabilis.* (Im.) But Thou, O my Saviour, wilt ever remain faithful to Thy friends. Thou wilt befriend them more particularly when everything else will forsake them. He who shall have given Thee all his affections will leave without regret a life in which he found no happiness save in doing Thy will. Thou wilt call him, and he will answer Thee, "Behold, I come."

Third Point.—The habitual remembrance of death enables us to die with the heart full of the sweetest confidence. The negligent or unfaithful servant may well dread the coming of his Master. *Videre eum, quem contempsisse se meminit, judicem formidat.* (St. Greg.) Not so with the good priest; his hope is grounded upon a life full of good works, to which God has promised a magnificent reward. *Cum tempus propinquae mortis advenerit, de gloria retributionis hilarescit.* (Ibid.) Now, the motive which encourages the fervent priest to multiply those works whilst he has time is precisely the thought that time will soon fail him. Hence he is careful to dispose wisely of every moment of his life. He says to himself. "Whatever thy hand is able to do, do it earnestly." (Eccle. ix. 10.) *Age, age, nunc quidquid agere potes, quia nescis quando morieris. . . Dum tempus habes, congrega tibi divitias immortales.* (Im. l. 1. c. 23.) Hence in this life everything is for heaven, because everything is done for God. "Blessed is the servant whom, when the Lord shall come, He will find so doing." (Matt. xxiv. 46.) "He shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacles of confidence, and in wealthy rest." (Is. xxxii. 18.)

Blessed, therefore, is the priest who prepares himself for death by habitually thinking on death; his life is pure, is full of merits; his heart adheres to God alone. Whether he dies young or in old age, his Master puts him in possession of his goods. "Amen, I say to you, He will establish him over all his goods." (Matt. xxiv. 47.)

Ask for that grace to-day in the celebration of the holy mysteries. You therein renew every day the memory of the death of Jesus Christ. He gives Himself to you under the symbols of death; how could you keep death out of your mind? Why did I

not, O my God, better employ hitherto a means of salvation so easy and so efficacious? I know the value of the thought of death, and I will endeavor to keep it always before my mind.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The habitual remembrance of death secures innocence of life. I. Whosoever thinks of death does not sin; faith teaches it. "Remember thy last ends, and thou shalt never sin." This promise is certain. God He is who speaks. Extent of this promise: by using this means I shall avoid every sin. It can be used without effort. All I need do is remember, and this remembrance is in a manner unavoidable. Reason confirms the teachings of faith. Pride and sensuality, which are the source of all sins, are rendered powerless by the remembrance of death. II. He who thinks of death does not persevere in the state of sin. God owes the blessings of life to no one; much less is He bound to grant it to His enemy. I, alas, am His enemy. Let my heart cease to beat. My body falls lifeless upon the earth. Whither will my soul go? Can I have peace of mind when living in so frightful a state?

Second Point.—The remembrance of death detaches from all perishable things, and makes our heart free to unite itself to God. I shall have to die very soon. This thought makes me fully comprehend the emptiness of all things of earth. Vanity of riches, of honors, of pleasures, of human friendships. Thou alone, O Jesus, wilt ever remain faithful. *Dilectio Jesu fidelis.*

Third Point.—He dies with a heart full of confidence who habitually remembers death. Time will soon be wanting to me, perhaps sooner than I expect. I must therefore try to multiply those good works which will give me so much confidence at the time of my death. I must therefore so regulate my life that every moment of it may be deserving of an eternal reward. Ah! he will die full of confidence who, thinking of the shortness of life, tries to spend it all for the glory of his Master.

MEDITATION LXIII.

ON PARTICULAR JUDGMENT. JUDGMENT OF THE BAD PRIEST.

The priest enjoys great privileges during his life, but, should he appear before God's tribunal in the state of mortal sin, the scales will be turned.

1.—*He will Find a more Angry Judge.*

2.—*Will Undergo a more Rigorous Examination.*

3.—*His Sentence will be more Severe.*

First Prelude.—Imagine that you see the tribunal of Jesus Christ, and your soul appearing before its Judge, to give an account of all its works.

Second Prelude.—Beseech almighty God to pierce your flesh with the wholesome fear which is the beginning of wisdom. "Pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear; for I am afraid of Thy judgments." (Ps. cx. 120.)

First Point.—He will find a more angry Judge. Who is He? He is God; God, Saviour and Avenger.

I. He is God. *Quid faciemus,* says St. Augustine, *sub tanti judicis majestate?* For the priest who has led a tepid life there is *dolor in exitu, horror in transitu, sudor in conspectu Dei.* (St. Bernard.) Like many other children of men, whom he was bound to undeceive of their errors, he had loved vanity and sought deception. Now he "hath slept his sleep" as they did. (Ps. lxxv. 6.) Death wakes him up, "as the dream of them that awake." (Ps. lxxii. 20.)

O deplorable dream, frightful awakening! His duty was to remind his brethren of things eternal; he was oblivious of them himself. He knew neither how to meditate nor to reflect; to-day it is impossible for him to be inattentive. His soul is invested with the light of that great God who causes the weight of His Majesty to weigh down upon it. "See ye that I alone am;" seest thou at last, O senseless man, that I alone was . . that I alone was to be feared, to be served, to be loved!

II. His judge is a Saviour; but He comes to revenge Himself for His blood, His graces, His love, which were despised. The greater was His mercy the greater will be His anger against him who abused so much of His mercy. The brothers of Joseph in Egypt trembled when standing before him; they beheld in him the minister of the King, the master of their life. But oh! how much

more terrified were they when they heard him exclaim, "I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt." (Gen. xlv. 4.) "His brethren could not answer him, being struck with exceeding great fear." (Ibid.)

To this minister of His altar, whom He had so long treated as a friend and brother, the Lord will say, Knowest thou Me? "I am Jesus." Behold these members which still bear the marks of My wounds! They remind thee of what I suffered for thee. . . Behold this body which thy impure hands were wont to handle. . . Cruel being! What an impious war thou didst wage against Me! "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." My patience has long endured, now justice must have its sway.

Second Point.—His examination will be more rigorous. How did he fulfil his duties as man, as priest, as pastor? As man, I must always follow the light of my reason, and refer to God the use of all my faculties, the employment of all my time. As a Christian, I should live the life of Jesus Christ. As a priest, I should be as much elevated above others in sanctity as I am elevated above them in dignity. As pastor, I am bound to watch over my flock. I must nourish their souls by prayer, by word, by example. Before the tribunal of my Judge I will clearly understand what I should have been at the altar, in the confessional, in attending the sick, in the midst of children, in the privacy of my house, in my intercourse with the world.

As the different obligations of my past life will present themselves to my mind, I will also remember how easy it had been for me to accomplish them, because of the abundant graces which I had received; and now the Judge will say to His unfaithful minister, "Give an account." I had expected that thou wouldst obey My commandments, and perform thy actions with greater perfection than the rest of the faithful. I had warned thee that more would be required of him to whom more had been given. How didst thou observe My commandments, but especially the greatest of all commandments, the precept of loving God with all thy heart, with all thy mind, with all thy strength? "Give an account," give Me an account of thy vocation, of thy consecration to the priesthood, of thy functions in My sanctuary. I permitted thee to act in My house almost as a sovereign; thou couldst dispense My mercy, and dispose even of My own person. Give Me an account of all the wonders I performed at thy word, through thy ministry . . of so many moments which I passed under thy eyes, within thy hands, within thyself. . . "Give an account." How didst thou dispense the treasures of My grace, how didst thou use and apply the merits of My sufferings and death? What

of the souls I had intrusted to thy care? My cross ceased not to tell you to what extent I loved them. Thou hast allowed them to perish! Through thy fault they have fallen into the eternal abyss! Thou shalt answer for their loss. *"Quid proderit non puniri suo, si puniendus est alieno peccato?"* (St. Greg.)

Third Point.—His sentence will be more severe. The case has been examined; the charges are overwhelming; the evidence is conclusive; the unfortunate priest has nothing to say to exculpate himself. In vain would he try to move the heart of his Judge by prayers and tears. "The triumpher in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance." (1 Kings xv. 29.) To him the Lord may say, Call Me "without mercy." The time of clemency is past; was it not long enough? Was not there enough bitterness in the chalice which I drank for thee? Had not I given thee a large enough share of the merits of My sufferings? Alas, I have to revenge Myself; and this My enemy had been so dear to My heart! "I will be revenged of My enemies." (Is. i. 24.) It must be so; I deprive thee of the high rank to which I had raised thee in My love. I cast thee away, since with all My graces I did not succeed in saving thee. "Depart from Me cursed . . . into everlasting fire!" And yet this accursed being is a man consecrated to God, a man at whose hands He was wont to bless His people!

"O terrifying sentence!" exclaims St. Bernard. *Totus tremo atque horreo ad memoriam istius sententiae.* Imagine that you behold an unfortunate priest standing before his Judge and crushed beneath the weight of this sentence. What passes within his heart, his mind, his whole being? He has been called to judge the world with Jesus Christ, but now he himself is judged, and his condemnation is irrevocable. He was destined to enjoy the richest benedictions; behold him loaded with maledictions. The choicest delights of heaven had been prepared for him, and behold him cast into the devouring fire; he had been destined to shine on a most resplendent throne in heaven, and behold him cast into the darkest of the dungeons.

O Jesus, crucified for me, I hide myself in Thy wounds, and there I will not cease to mourn until Thou shalt have forgiven me. *Juste judex ultionis, donum fac remissionis, ante diem rationis. Quaerens me sedisti lassus, redemisti crucem passus; tantus labor non sit cassus!* O Mary, thou canst still save me; wilt thou not have pity? *Memorare, O piissima virgo Maria.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—He will find a more angry judge. He is God, a Saviour and Avenger. *Dolor in exitu, horror in transitu, sudor in*

conspectu Dei. Seest thou at last, O senseless man, "that I alone was," that I alone was to be feared, to be loved, to be served? The Saviour God comes to revenge His love, His graces, His blood, which were all despised.

Second Point.—His examination will be more rigorous. As a man, as a Christian, as a priest and pastor I had many and important obligations laid upon me. Not one of them shall be forgotten in the account I shall have to give. Graces received will also be remembered. *Redde rationem.* Give an account, not only of the sins thou hast committed, but also of the good thou shouldest have done. *Quid prodest non puniri suo; si puniendus est alieno peccato?*

Third Point.—His sentence will be more severe. He can say nothing to justify himself. Alas, says the Lord, I must avenge Myself, and the object of My vengeance had been so dear to Me! Thou art degraded, cast away, since thou hast abused all My graces. Depart from Me, thou cursed, into everlasting fire. *Totus tremo atque horreo ad memoriam istius sententiae.*

MEDITATION LXIV.

GLORY AND HAPPINESS OF THE GOOD PRIEST ON THE DAY OF THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

1.—*In the Circumstances which Precede the Judgment.*
2.—*In the Circumstances which Accompany It.*
3.—*In the Sentence which Follows the Judgment.*

First Point.—Glory and happiness of the good priest in the circumstances which precede the judgment. These are: the destruction of the world; the general resurrection; the separation of the good from the wicked; the assembling of the elect at the right of the sovereign Judge.

If the day of the general judgment is the "great day of the Lord" (Mal. iv. 5), it may also be termed the great day of the saints, but particularly the great day of the holy priests. In the midst of the convulsion of nature, when the sinners "shall be troubled with terrible fear, the just shall stand with great constancy." (Wisd. v.) "Their light shall break forth as the morning, and their justice shall go before their face." (Is. lviii. 8.)

The summons to appear before the great tribunal will be for them an invitation of triumph! "Arise, ministers of Jesus, you His faithful friends; you have promulgated His laws, upheld His

interests, you have honored Him before men; He will now honor you before the universe." How blessed the resurrection of the good priest, who bore in his members the mortification of Jesus Christ, and worthily nourished his soul with the glorified body of Jesus Christ! Oh, what a moment, when he sees himself invested with immortality, admitted amongst the saints, occupying a rank of honor amongst them, surrounded by the throng of those souls which owe him their salvation! Imagine that you see standing around the sovereign Judge all those who co-operated with Him in the redemption of men. Then you see St. Peter presenting to the Saviour the faithful of Judea; St. Andrew presents to Him the nations of Achaia, St. John the kingdom of Asia, St. Thomas those of the Indies, and St. Paul presents to Him nearly the whole world. There also, good shepherd, thou wilt appear in the company of those sheep of thine which were ever docile, and of those others whom thou broughtest back to the fold through thy prayers and thy continuous labors. Oh, what a day of joy for him who shall have spent his life in loving Jesus Christ and causing Him to be loved! These things are naught but preludes, however, to what will follow.

Second Point.—Glory and happiness of the good priest in the circumstances which will accompany the general judgment. In place of being judged, he will judge others. In place of being accused, he will be defended and praised by the Lord.

All being in order and prepared, the Son of man appears. He comes down from heaven in that glorious state which He had foretold, and of which the Church loves so well to remind us. *Et iterum venturus est cum gloria judicare vivos et mortuos.* At His aspect all nature shudders. Just and sinners alike fall upon their knees and adore Him. What joy and exultation amongst the assembled saints! They at last witness the triumph of this God of Bethlehem, of Calvary, of the altar, whom the world so obstinately disregarded. Their love for Him is the measure of their joy. They rush to Him; they are taken up in the clouds to meet Him (Ch. vi. 16), and uniting their voices to those of the angels, they celebrate the great victory of the Lamb, who by His immolation has redeemed and saved all.

Good priest, elect of God, a still brighter destiny is in store for you! You now follow Jesus Christ as His minister. He sees you near Him in the afflictions and sufferings of His apostolic life. Great indeed shall be your reward. "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations, and I dispose to you as My Father has disposed to Me a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging

the twelve tribes of Israel." O the incomparable privilege! To be the associate of the Son of God, when He will come to judge the world, to confound vice and to crown virtue! *Quis mihi tribuat*, says St. Bernard, *sessionis hujus imperturbata frui requie, quam desidero, quam cupio, quam requiro?* O good priests, how resplendent the beauty of your brows, how sweet the exultation of your hearts, when, with the applause of all the court of heaven, you will go to rest upon your beds of righteousness. "The saints shall rejoice in glory. They shall be joyful in their beds." (Ps. cxlix. 5.)

There will be accusations, however; but none against the elect of God. Who will dare accuse them? He Himself will be their defender and panegyrist in the presence and with the applause of the whole world. The praise which comes from the world is vain or unjust, and always dangerous, and therefore the wise man fears and despises it. But is there any glory like unto praise from God! Jesus will make known all these heroic virtues and actions which His good servants had concealed from the eyes of men. The pure intentions, the interior acts of virtue of the good priests, their efforts and desires to extend the kingdom of God's grace in men's hearts, all have been recorded and shall be made known on the day of judgment. *Cogita quanta gloria, quantus honor, quanta corona illa futura sit, cum judex dicet: Iste verbum meum servavit, iste fidem meam praedicavit, iste pauperem meum non despexit, iste avaritiam conculcavit, iste mundum, quasi non esset, derisit.* (St. Chrys.)

Third Point.—Glory and happiness of the good priest when the last sentence shall be pronounced. Let us meditate on the sentence of the elect, imagining ourselves to be amongst the good priests who will hear it. "Come" to God, your last end, the center of all felicity! "Blessed of My Father." My Father has blessed you in consideration of Me, because you were My members, My priests. He has replenished you with "all celestial benediction"; receive now His supreme, His eternal benediction! You followed Me when I called you to suffer in My vineyard; you walked in My footsteps amongst crosses and humiliations, for the glory of My Father, and the salvation of souls. You have been faithful workers in My vineyard; you have a right to the rich reward which has been promised to you. For the love of Me you had given up all things, you had given up yourselves. "Come." In Me you will find yourselves anew; and with Me you will find all things good. Rise, from labor to rest, from exile to your country, from poverty and abjection to the possession of a kingdom. "Possess the kingdom." You were not ashamed of Me before men—I will not be ashamed of you before God and His angels. You were, as I was, the object of the hatred and maledictions of the world; to-day you are

the blessed of My Father, the object of His eternal complacency. My kingdom was prepared for you from the beginning of the world; reign with Me now forever and ever. O blessed hope! Delightful moment! O eternity of joy and triumph!

As a preparation for your Mass consider that you are about to hold in your hands, to elevate toward heaven, and to receive in your breast, the same Son of God who will come down from heaven in great Majesty at the last day. He will come in holy communion to give you the choice of either sentence: *In potestate nostra posuit qualiter in die judicii judicemur.* (St. Aug.) Adopt the practice of St. Thomas, who, when visiting the adorable Sacrament, would excite himself to adoration, confidence, and filial fear by saying: *Tu rex gloriae, Christe; tu Patris sempiternus es Filius. Tu ad liberandum suscepturus hominem, non horruisti virginis uterum. . . . Judex crederis esse venturus. Te ergo quaesumus, tuis famulis subveni, quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Glory and happiness of the good priest in the circumstances which will precede the last judgment. These are: the destruction of the world, the general resurrection, the separation of the good from the wicked. In the midst of the convulsions of nature, of the consternation of sinners, the just will be filled with sublime confidence. The summons to appear before the great tribunal will be for them an invitation of triumph. O blessed resurrection, when in coming forth from their graves they find themselves invested with a blessed immortality! It will then be known which of the two has loved his body, the sensual worldling or the mortified priest. Behold the good priest admitted to the most delightful society! Oh, how grateful he is to God for having separated him from the world and its vanities!

Second Point.—Glory and happiness of the good priest in the circumstances which accompany the last judgment. In place of being judged, he will judge; in place of being accused, he will be praised by the Lord Himself. Let us consider the following promise: "I have prepared for you as the Father has prepared for Me a kingdom. . . . Sitting upon thrones you shall judge with Me the tribes of Israel." The sovereign Judge will become the panegyrist of his servants. He will praise them in presence of the whole world. He will declare openly to the world the purity of their intentions, and will keep an account, not only of the good they shall have done, but also of that which they had desired to do.

Third Point.—Glory and happiness of the good priest in the hearing of the last sentence. "Come" from labor to rest, from exile to your country, from abjection to glory. . . . My Father blessed you, because you were My dear disciples. Receive His supreme, his eternal benediction! You had forsaken all things; you had forsaken yourselves for My sake. Come and find all you abandoned in Me, come and find all things good in Me. My kingdom was acquired for you by My tears; come, possess it, and reign with Me forever and ever. O blessed moment! O eternity of joy and of triumph!

MEDITATION LXV.

THE REPROBATE PRIEST AT THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

1.—*He is Summoned.*
2.—*He is Confounded.*
3.—*He is Condemned.*

For the holy priest all is glory and happiness in the circumstances which precede, accompany, and follow the last judgment. All is shame and despair for the priest who has not lived up to his sublime vocation.

First Point.—The reprobate priest forced to appear at the general judgment. The resurrection is as much dreaded by him as it was desired by the good priest. Where was he before the loud blast of the trumpet? His body was in a grave; his soul was in hell. Why can they not remain forever where they lie? The body is without suffering; but for the soul, hell, where it now dwells, is a less dreadful punishment than to be forced to re-enter the body which was the instrument of its crimes. But God has commanded: Arise, ye dead; arise, ye shepherds and flocks; arise, ye just and sinners. Arise, thou profaner of My sanctuary; come and feel the weight of My vengeance, since thou didst reject My mercy! Come, show to the universe that sacerdotal robe which thou shouldst have carried before Me pure and without stain. Where did you draggle it? The soul has, against its will, entered that prison of flesh, carrying within its bosom the fire which devours it. From the same graveyard issue forth the elect and the reprobate. O shame! O bitter remorse of the priest appointed to sanctify his brethren, when around him he sees inhabitants of his parish, sheep of his own flock, invested with bodies

resplendent with the splendor of God Himself, whilst his own body, that body that was daily nourished with the glorified flesh of the Saviour, remains a hideous object marked with the seal of reprobation! "They shall be troubled with terrible fear . . . saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit . . . we fools! Behold how they are numbered amongst the children of God." O tardy and dreadful penance!

The moment of the eternal separation has come! Go to His right, ye friends of Jesus, and ye, His enemies, pass to the left. "O prodigious ignominy! Pastors are put amongst the goats; fishers of men are cast amongst the bad fish, the workers of the vineyard thrown into the flames with the useless branches!" (St. Pet. Ble.) Picture to yourselves a priest in the midst of that unclean crowd of debauchees and impious. If he would only remain unknown among them; but no, he is, according to St. Isaias, a general who has just lost a battle and is trying to escape from his victorious enemy. He throws away the insignia of his grade, disguises himself, endeavors to hide himself in the crowd; but whither will you go, unfortunate, unworthy priest? Can you strip yourself of your character? It should have been for you a source of glory; it shall be the source of your shame. "Where will you leave your glory?" (Is. x. 3.) You shall drink to the dregs the bitter cup of confusion and despair.

The Son of man appears with all the majesty of the Son of God! He comes down; His throne is upon a bright cloud. Loud groanings and lamentations arise from the assembly of the wicked. "Then will all the tribes of the earth mourn." Bitter tears will flow from the eyes of the unbelievers, from the tribe of hypocrites, from the tribe of the proud and lecherous. But of all these tears the bitterest will be those of the bad priest, who will have offended God with greater knowledge and perversity. They tremble at the sight of the Lamb; they endeavor to flee from his wrath. What then? Is there anything formidable about a lamb? Look up, O Priests! He it is whom you so many times offered to the adoration of the faithful. *Ecce Agnus Dei.* Ah! you should have adored Him yourselves; but you have slain Him; you trampled His sacred blood under your feet. He cometh not now to take away the sins of the world; He comes to punish them with all the severity of His justice. But look up and behold your Redeemer! What majesty, but also what goodness in His countenance! Is He not the fairest of all the children of men? "This is the cause of our despair," says St. Augustine. For then to behold Our Saviour and His sacred wounds and to read in every one of them no other sentence but that of death; to behold Him

one moment and never to see Him again! *Quam amarum est Christum videre et perdere!* Ye rocks and mountains, fall upon us, and thou hell deliver us from a sight at once so ravishing and so cruel. "And they say to the mountains and the rocks: fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him who sitteth upon the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb." (Ap. vi. 16.)

Second Point.—The reprobate priest confounded at the last judgment. The book of consciences is opened; the witnesses are brought in.

Then, says St. Paul, "the sovereign Judge will make known the secrets of the hearts." (1 Cor. iv. 5.) Of what hearts does he speak? God unveils His own heart first and yours next, O unfaithful Priest. Through this two-fold manifestation the world will see the justice of the dreadful sentence.

O heart of Jesus, so great, so tender, so meek, so generous to Thy friends, so good, so patient to Thine enemies themselves! Thou at last shalt be known on that day! They shall then understand all the treasures of Thy compassion, all the efforts and stratagems employed by Thee in order to save ungrateful souls! O Priest, why did you not respond to the designs of this Sacred Heart!

Jesus has opened His Sacred Heart; He will now make known the secrets of yours. To the multitude of His blessings He will oppose the multitude of your crimes, and dispel the darkness in which you had wrapped yourself so carefully. *Illuminabit abscondita tenebrarum.* You sought to deceive yourself; you loved your self-delusion; you were skilled in the mimicry of modesty, piety, zeal; you sought solitude and darkness; you had done everything to avoid suspicion. All shall be revealed. What continual hypocrisy practised, what numberless sins committed, in order to conceal a single transgression! This shall be made known, and your parishoners, your brother priests, and the whole world shall see the extent and shame of your criminal actions. "I will discover thy shame to thy face, and will show thy nakedness to the nation . . . and I will cast abominations upon thee." (Nah. iii. 6.)

What a cry of indignation shall arise from the assembly of the just, and from the multitude of the reprobate, when at the opening of those whitened sepulchres they will perceive the mass of corruption concealed beneath so saintly a habit! To this priest, so sinful and hypocritical, the Son of God will say: "Come:" to yourself I will appeal against you. How durst you, with your impure lips, proclaim My justice? My word had been defiled, if this were possible, by contact with such lips. In vain would you declare that you loved My "commandments above gold and the topaz";

you in reality hated my sacred law. You had chosen Me for the portion of your inheritance, but what did you prefer to Me? "And with adultery thou hast been a partaker." (Ps. xlix. 18.) Upon you did the Church, your Mother, rely to procure the salvation of her children, and to them you became a cause of scandal. "Thou didst lay a scandal against thy Mother's son. . . . These things hast thou done, and I was silent." Could you believe that I would be like unto you; would you interpret My excessive patience as an approval of your criminal life? But I have set upon this day to confound you, by exposing you to the gaze of My angels, of My saints, of the nations assembled, and of yourself. "I will expose thee and set before thy face." (Ibid.)

Mortifying comparisons will fill up the measure of the shame of the bad priest. He is compared to devout laymen, to those for whom he should have been a pattern; but he did not even imitate them. *Quomodo non sit confusio esse illos inferiores laicis, quos etiam esse aequales magna confusio est?* (St. Chrys.) They contrast his conduct with his preachings, his rank, the graces that were lavished upon him. They served God in the midst of the world with its temptations; should he not have served Him in the sanctuary? *Erubescant sacerdotes, si sacratioris vitae inveniantur laici, qui hujus mundi fluctibus sunt immersi.* (St. Greg.) He is compared to sinners whose vices he was wont to censure, and who now wonder to see him in their midst, one of themselves as it were, more sinful and criminal than any of them. "Thou also art wounded as well as we; thou art become like unto us, . . . how art thou fallen from heaven?" (Is. xiv. 10, 12.) He is compared to the ministers of Satan, who were more zealous in the service of idols than in the service of God. In meditating on this subject, St. Augustine exclaims: *Vae mihi misero, cum venerit dies judicii, et aperti fuerint libri conscientiarum; cum dicetur de me: Ecce homo et opera ejus! Quid faciam tunc, Domine Deus meus, cum coeli revelabunt iniquitatem meam, et adversum me terra consurget? Ecce nihil respondere potero; sed demisso capite prae confusione, coram te stabo trepidus et confusus.*

Third Point.—The wicked priest is condemned at the universal judgment. St. Chrysostom declares that the wicked priest, after being thus convinced and confounded, shall be stripped of his dignity in presence of the universe. Nothing will be left him save his priestly character for his eternal confusion. One of the prophets seems to have foreseen this degradation of the priest. "They shall strip thee of thy garments, and take away the instruments of thy glory, . . . and shall let thee go naked and full of disgrace. (Ezech. xxiii. 26, 29.)

After inviting all creatures to judge between Him and His vineyard, the adorable Saviour will now, Himself, pronounce the sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed into everlasting fire." Let him depart! From whom? For what cause? Whither and how will he go? For what length of time? Find an answer to these five questions in the sentence itself. From whom must he depart? From Me, Me, the Lord. Behold for the last time your God, whom My good priest will contemplate forever amidst the delights of heaven; you shall see Me nevermore. Depart, frail creature, of whom I was the only support. Depart, ungrateful creature, whom I loved to excess, and whom now I can not hate sufficiently. Depart, rebellious creatures, upon whom I lavished my choicest benedictions, against whom I now pronounce my most dreadful anathemas, "cursed." Depart. Why? Knowest thou not, says the avenging God, if I turn against thee, thou thyself hast forced Me to it? Ah! this sentence causes My heart to bleed. What is it that I have not done in order to prevent it? How obstinate must have been thy resistance to the divine grace, since thou hast forced Me to destroy thee! Let him depart! In what manner? Alas, who can word it? Who can think of it without shuddering? He must depart in despair; all his efforts to remain united to the sovereign Good are useless! "Depart, I know you not. Let him depart." Whither wilt thou send him, O Lord? *In ignem*—into fire. This fire will devour him with measure according to the greater or lesser abuse he has made of God's mercy. For thee I had prepared the lot of the good angels; thou hast chosen to be punished with the demons. The fire "was prepared for the devil and his angels." Once more, "let him depart." For what length of time? Forever! Understand now the extent and rigor of My justice. When I urged thee to come to Me, thou preferredst to separate from Me, let the separation be eternal! There is now no pardon; there is no hope. "Into everlasting fire."

The two sentences are pronounced; the two cities are separate; the elect make their triumphant ascension; the reprobate are cast down into the flames—all is over. See, on one side, sin and sovereign calamity; on the other, virtue and supreme happiness. O my soul, make thy choice.

I will make the following resolutions: I will examine all my past life, and confess that there is matter in it for a most dreadful judgment. I have sinned, O Lord; I have sinned exceedingly: *peccavi nimis;* let this be henceforth the continual object of my tears; do Thou preserve within me the spirit of compunction. I will judge myself rigorously. If I treat myself justly, the Lord

will have only mercy to mete out to me; the promise is certain. "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." (1 Cor. xi. 31.) I will guard myself against the secret insinuations of self-love, which is ever inclined to flatter sensuality. I will not judge others. "Judge not, that thou may not be judged." (Matt. vii. 1.) "With what measure you shall mete, it shall be measured to you again. (Ib.) I will be merciful, that I may obtain mercy.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The unfaithful priest summoned to appear at the last judgment. The resurrection is for him as dreadful as it is desirable for the holy priest. God has given the command through the voice of the archangel. "Arise, you, the enemies of My name; come, and since My benefactions would not win your hearts, come, and bear if you can the weight of My vengeance." The sepulchres are opened at the sound of the trumpet. From the same burial-place there arise the elect and the reprobate. Oh, confusion and shame of the iniquitous priest, who beholds those men clothed with the splendor of God whose model he should have been, and whom he has not even imitated! The moment of the separation has come. To the right, you, His friends; and you, His enemies, to the left. The sovereign Judge descends. What cries and lamentations arise from the assembly of the wicked. They wish to flee from the wrath of the Lamb. This Lamb of God does not now come to blot away the sins of the world; He comes to punish the crimes which were not atoned for by penance.

Second Point.—The unfaithful priest confounded at the last judgment. The Judge will make known the secrets of hearts; the secrets of His own heart first; and then the secrets of your heart, O guilty Priest! He will make known to the world all that He did for you, and all that you did against Him. He will dispel the darkness in which you had so carefully concealed yourself; the darkness of self-love and dissimulation; the darkness of the night and of solitude—all shall be revealed. What a cry of indignation will arise from the company of the elect, and from the multitude of the reprobate, when all the whitened sepulchres will be opened.

Third Point.—The unfaithful priest condemned at the last judgment. The sovereign Judge pronounces the sentence: Depart; from whom? From Me, thou ungrateful creature, for whom My richest blessings had been prepared, and who hast forced Me to curse thee. Whither dost thou send him, O Lord? Into the devouring flames. For how long? Alas, forever "into everlasting fire."

MEDITATION LXVI.

ON HELL. WE SHOULD ALL FEAR IT.

1.—*What is Hell?*
2.—*Who Will go to Hell?*

First Prelude.—Picture the abyss of hell to yourself as a vast horrible prison, wherein the enemies of God are detained for eternity. Measure its length, its width, its depth.

Second Prelude.—Beg of God to grant you a vivid apprehension of the torments of hell, so that fear, if not divine love, may keep you from committing sin.

First Point.—What is hell? We may distinguish a two-fold hell; the hell of the body and the hell of the soul. "Fear Him that can destroy both soul and body into hell." (Matt. x. 28.)

I. In the torments of the body, consider their universality, their violence, their continuity.

Hell is the "place of torments." (Luc. xvi. 28.) There exist all evils, all sorrows. "Every sorrow shall fall upon him." (Job, xx. 22.) One shudders at the thought of that countless multitude of torments which rush upon each member of the reprobate, like the vulture upon his prey. If the pains of the head alone are counted by thousands, how could we enumerate those of the whole body? Add up and accumulate the pains which may come from outside sources, all the inventions of justice or of human ferocity; rack, iron hooks, burning-hot gridirons, boiling oil—all the refined cruelties employed by tyrants or torturers upon their victims, in all the countries of the world since the day of creation; combine and inflict on one person all these divers torments. A single one of these pains draws tears and cries from the most courageous man, and here there is the combination of all imaginable tortures. "Every sorrow shall fall upon him."

As to their violence, the holy Doctors assure us that the least torment of the reprobate is more horrible than all there has been, or that can be ever suffered by the sick, the martyrs, and the victims of human justice. If such are the lesser torments of hell, what can be said of the greater ones? What of the reunion and assemblage of them all? Let us judge of the others by that of fire.

Is there anything that causes more intolerable pains than fire? Its name alone suffices to inspire terror. When, under our eyes, an unfortunate family is consumed alive in the flames of their

home, when from the midst of the conflagration we hear their cries of distress, our very hearts are rent with anguish; yet this, after all, is nothing but an earthly fire. This fire of ours is a gift, and a great gift of the Creator. But the fire of hell is created by God to be the instrument of His vengeance. "He has kindled it in His fury." (Deut. xxxii. 22.) Its power is incomprehensible, as is the almighty and angry God who actuates it.

In this fire faith discovers to us, as it were, supernatural qualities. It acts upon the soul as well as upon the body. It devours the reprobate, and preserves them for renewed torments; it renders them over-sensitive to suffering, and preserves its energy to torture them. This is an intelligent fire, says St. John Chrysostom; knowing how to distinguish between sinner and sinner, between the senses or faculties which were used as instruments of crime, following an exact proportion between the punishment and the degree of perversity which it punishes. So penetrating is this fire that it identifies itself to some extent with its victims. "Every one shall be salted with fire, and every victim shall be salted with salt." (Marc. ix. 48.) It causes the blood to boil in their veins, and the marrow in their bones.

Alas! these sufferings have to be endured continuously, without the least alleviation. On earth there are intermissions in the greatest pains. If one suffers continually, the suffering has not the same intensity. The fever is not always so violent, and at times a beneficial slumber will interrupt the moanings of the sick man; a friend will call and afford some comfort; one may change his position, and in this he finds relief; moreover, one becomes accustomed to sufferings, and at last life goes out, and with it ends the sufferings.

There is nothing like this in hell. Here there is always the paroxysm of anguish; no wasting away of the organs that may blunt its acuteness; no giving away of nature that may absorb its vivacity. In hell there are no friends; there are none there but torturers and victims, reprobates and demons; and all the reprobates are torturers and demons, one to another. Condemned to occupy the most painful position, the reprobate must remain there, unable to move for all eternity, enduring the agony of the most cruel death, and never being allowed to die. So much for the body.

II. The hell of the soul is more horrible yet. Sufferings of the *imagination.* It continually torments the reprobate by the most irksome representations. It puts vividly before his eyes what he was upon earth, what he would have been in heaven, what he will be for eternity. On earth he enjoyed gratifications, pleasures of

many kinds; in his abode of hell he has nothing but torments; whilst on earth, in the midst of his troubles, he could promise to himself better things in the future; he would hear words of consolation; he occasionally met a kind friend,—he meets now with nothing but hatred and fury. Hated by demons, by men, by himself; he can only curse, gnash his teeth, and call for a speedy death, which does not, which will never come. O eternity! O thought of eternity, ever-present to the mind! He plunges within that endless duration; he piles up millions and millions of ages; he looks everywhere for an end, but the end is not to be found. Ah! if it be dreadful to suffer forever, is it not almost as dreadful to know that one must suffer forever? Carry a ball of lead in your hand; your hand touches but one part of the ball, yet you feel the whole weight of it; thus the reprobate continually combines within his mind all future sufferings added to those of the present, bears in a manner at each moment the whole weight of eternity.

Torment of the *memory.* It reminds him of what he did to distinguish himself in the world; and what has come of it! Of so many circumstances most favorable to his salvation. Why did he not employ them properly? Ah, had I followed that inspiration of my conscience! If I had not yielded so readily to that temptation! Alas, I willed to lose my soul! I have through pride and love of pleasure given myself up to the tortures and reproaches of hell.

Torments of the *intellect.* It shows clearly to the reprobate the folly of his conduct, the injustice, the shame, the enormity of his sins. It shows him the greatness of God, His ineffable perfections, but above all His infinite goodness! Ungrateful being, thou didst outrage thy benefactor! Perjurer, thou didst violate all thy oaths. Thou attemptest to inflict death on thy Father. No, no, for so many crimes an eternal hell is not too great a punishment. "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right." (Ps. cxviii. 137.)

Torment of the *will.* Hardly has the soul left the body when it springs toward God, its necessary end. This is a thirst which devours the soul, a hunger which consumes it. God, God, I must possess Him!—such is the cry of the whole being. God excites still more the ardor of its desires, by partly unveiling His beauty to that soul. It draws it toward him through the omnipotence of his charms. But whilst making giant efforts to reach Him, God repels it, God crushes it by repeating eternally, "Depart"; no, there is no God for thee; no God, save to curse thee. "Depart from Me, ye cursed."

This soul, in her transports of frenzy, would wish to deprive God of those perfections which make Him so amiable, and destroy Him;

or to strip herself of that innate and so vehement an inclination to love God; and as she can not succeed in this, she blasphemes against God and falls back upon herself, loading herself with reproaches and maledictions. O dreadful fate! Always to crave, and this with the most ardent longing, that which shall never be; and never to will what will last forever. We may apply to hell what is said of heaven: The eye of man has not seen, his ear has not heard, nor has it entered into his heart to know the torments which Thou hast prepared for those who offend Thee.

Second Point.—Who shall fall into the furnace of hell? The commission of one mortal sin deserves hell. Who can say, I never committed one mortal sin? Much less can it be said, I shall never be guilty of one. It is true that penance is a sure remedy against it; but, again, who can assure himself that he shall have time and grace to repent, or be certain that the penance which he performed did certainly blot away all his crimes? It follows that all are in reality in danger of falling into hell. As for you, saints of this world, humble yourselves, tremble, watch continually; you serve your God with an upright heart; your life is pure, or if it was not ever such, your tears have effaced former stains; then the peace which you enjoy, the numberless favors which you receive, are a pledge of the pardon kindly granted, and of the new graces which He will bestow upon you. Ah, you must therefore hope, you must rejoice in the Lord, but let fear be united to joy. Alas, one temptation unresisted suffices to send your soul forever into the flames of hell.

This wholesome fear was constantly before the minds of the greatest saints. Remember St. Paul, once raised to the third heaven, spending himself for the glory of God and the salvation of his brethren, who declared that he was not conscious of anything to reproach himself with, and withal he trembled and feared, lest after preaching to others he might himself become a castaway. St. Augustine said to his people: "You tremble, my brethren; I fear as you do, and I fear for myself as I fear for you. I have carefully studied our sacred books, and I found nothing therein which might dispense me from trembling." *Nimis timens esse volo, ignem aeternum metuo.* St. Jerome retires from the world into the wildest solitude, *Scorpionum socius et ferarum,* as he relates himself; tears flow continually from his eyes, and the echoes of the desert repeat his lamentations: *Quotidie gemitus, quotidie lacrymae.* He lacerates his body, he bruises it with stones. What was the cause of this severe self-inflicted penance? *Ob gehennae metum tali me carcere damnaveram.* St. Francis Borgia is asked, "Why do you appear more sad than usual?" He answers: "I have meditated on hell, and I feel so affected and terrified, that I fancy that every one con-

siders me as a monster come out of the abyss, and spreading terror whithersoever he goes." St. Peter Damien confesses that at the mere thought of hell the hair of his head stood on end. St. Bernard trembled at the moment of death; yet his life had been the life of a saint, had been made illustrious by miracles. He exclaimed from his solitude: "O infernal abyss! Cruel region, region of fire, the thought of thee terrifies my soul! Save me, my God, save me from hell through hell itself. Thy mercy loves to perform such miracles. But if Thou wilt not grant me tears of sincere repentance, how shall I be able to enjoy the torrents of delights furnished to those who weep? Ah, my God, grant me to shed tears, send me sufferings if Thou wilt. Spare me not in this world, but free me from the danger wherein I am losing my soul for eternity!" *Hic ure, hic seca . . Modo in aeternum parcas.* (St. Aug.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What is hell? We may distinguish a two-fold hell: the hell of the body and the hell of the soul.

Regarding the pains of the body, consider their universality, their violence, their continuity. Hell is the "place of torments." All the sufferings there are excessive. To the sufferings caused by sickness of all kinds, add those which come from exterior causes, the rack, iron hooks, boiling oil, etc. As to their violence, it is such as the holy Doctors teach us that it surpasses that of all the sufferings of earth, of all the torments imaginable. Think of the torment of fire, of that fire created to be the instrument of the vengeance of God! Those sufferings have to be endured continuously, without the least alleviation. So much for the hell of the body.

The hell of the soul is more frightful yet. Torments of the *imagination.* It tortures the reprobate by representing to him what he was, what he could have been in heaven, what he must be for all eternity. It plunges into eternity, heaps up millions of ages upon millions of ages. Torment of the *memory.* What does it remind him of? Of the *intellect.* It shows him the greatness of God, His justice, His goodness, and forces him to acknowledge that he has well deserved his fate. Of the *will.* He springs toward God. He must have God—God repels him. He will forever wish to have what shall never be, and will forever hate what he eternally would wish to shun.

Second Point.—Whom is hell for? One mortal sin deserves hell! Who would dare say, I never committed a mortal sin, or, I shall never be guilty of one! Danger of hell even for the just. Rejoice,

O ye saints, but cease not to fear. St. Paul, St. Augustine, all the greatest saints were afraid of hell. Spare me not in this world, O my God! but save me from that terrible abyss of hell!

MEDITATION LXVII.

HELL. NO ONE SHOULD FEAR IT SO MUCH AS THE PRIESTS.

1.—*They are Greatly Exposed to Fall into it.*
2.—*Because the Hell of the Priests is more Horrible than that of the other Reprobates.*

First Point.—The priest is in great danger of losing his soul. The priestly character does not make the priest impeccable; and he, like any other, is liable to die in the state of sin. Of the twelve priests consecrated by Our Lord, the first one who died was cast into the flames of hell, and this occurred at the very time of man's redemption by the death of Christ. Judas was damned, we might say, within the arms of Our Lord, and covered with His blood. When we speak of dangers peculiar to priests, we refer to those which come from the world, from the devil, and the functions of his ministry; we also have referred to his own personal sins, and to the sins of others.

I. The priest is in danger of losing his soul from being exposed to the seductions of the world. Solitaries avoid the seductions of the world by retiring from it; but the pastor must remain in the midst of it in order to destroy its baneful influence. Yet, in order to preserve the truth amidst so many errors, and to remain pure amidst a corruption so universal, the priest has need of continual vigilance and mortification. The strongest man can hardly resist the insidious influence of a poisonous atmosphere.

II. The devil attacks the priest with greater fury and persistence than he does others. In order the easier to destroy the flock he begins by striking the shepherd. *Antiquus hostis caput potius quam membra, duces exercitus potius quam militum turmam, et pastores libentius quam ovium gregres oppugnare conatur.* (St. Laur. Just.) The pride of Satan is hardly satisfied with the victory which he gains over a common layman by causing him to commit mortal sin; but how well he triumphs when he brings about the fall of a priest who liberated souls from his thraldom. Had he not asked to sift the apostles as wheat?

III. The priest finds danger for his soul in his very functions. These functions require him to be always pure as an angel, since he must be ready at all times to celebrate the holy mysteries, and to administer the sacraments. He must unite in his person virtues apparently the most incompatible, viz., the sense of his dignity, the most profound humility, a most ardent zeal, with consummate prudence, meekness, and firmness. The unavoidable intercourse of the priest with the just and sinners; the care of the sick, the practice of hearing confessions, are so many circumstances full of great danger for his soul.

IV. His own sins are a danger. A single one, if it be mortal, suffices to deserve the fate of the reprobate; and there is, alas, so much weakness in the very man who seems to be the strongest! Our inclination to sin has so much power to lead us astray! And, again, faults which in a layman would be slight may become real crimes in us, on account of our sacred character, of our knowledge. The Council of Trent is explicit on this matter: *Levia etiam delicta, quae in ipsis gravia essent.* (Sess. xxii.)

V. A last danger for the priest consists in the sins of others, which are imputed to him when he has not prevented them as much as he could. The ordinary Christian will have to answer almost exclusively for himself alone. *Hoc interest inter unumquemque vestrum et nos, quod vos pene de vobis solis reddituri estis rationem, nos autem et de nobis et de omnibus vobis.* A priest may be adorned with all the virtues; if he neglects to correct sinners, and to instruct them, he will share in their condemnation. *Sacerdotes pro populorum iniquitate damnantur, si eos aut ignorantes non erudiant, aut peccantes non arguant.* (St. Isid. Hisp.)

This it was which lead St. John Chrysostom to utter the following words, words which good priests love to consider, and which the lukewarm ought never to forget: *Non temere dico, sed ut affectus sum et sentio; non arbitror inter sacerdotes multos esse qui salvi fiant; sed multo plures qui pereant, non tam propriis peccatis, quam alienis quae non curaverunt.* Behold, however, another motive of terror. Assist me, O my God, in this painful meditation.

Second Point.—The hell of the priest is incomparably more horrible than that of the other reprobates. Under a just God, a more inexcusable perversity should be punished with more severe chastisements. Such is the teaching of reason. If the crown which in heaven encircles the brow of the good priest has far more brilliancy than the crown of the other elect, just as the light of the stars surpasses that of the firmament, there must also exist a proportionate difference between the hell of the bad priest and the hell of the bad Christian. Let us open the Scriptures: "That ser-

vant who knew the will of his master, . . . and did it not, . . . shall be beaten with many stripes." (Luc. xii. 47.) "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required." (Ib.) A more severe judgment is in store for them that bear rule. (Wisd. vi. 6.) "For him that is little, mercy is granted; but the mighty shall be mightily tormented." (Ib.) The just Judge will punish the priest according to the extent of his knowledge, the number and excellences of the gifts received, the pre-eminence of his rank, the greatness of his powers. To the priest had been given the sacred office of making God's will known to men. Will the plea of ignorance be accepted in his case? The great God has given Himself to him every day of his sacerdotal life; will he pretend that he had not received much? What shall we say of the rank of him who was revered by the angels? What of the power of him who could shut the gates of hell and open the gates of heaven; to whom the King of kings yielded obedience?

I now picture to myself a priest plunged in the "great lake of the wrath of God," confounded amongst the hideous mass of impenitent sinners. Behold him under the feet of the devil, subject in all the parts of his being to the action of a devouring fire. This fire so intolerable to all its victims, torturing the priest in a manner so particularly terrible that he envies the fate of the other reprobates. Should he not suffer extraordinary torments who has abused extraordinary graces? Had he not been appointed to preach the doctrines of Christ, to defend His moral code, to establish His worship? But he was not even a Christian. What becomes of the justice of God, if punishment was the same for ordinary sinners as for those who drew reproach upon the holy spouse of Christ; filled her with bitter sorrow; profaned her sacraments, of which they were the ministers; and perverted the souls confided to their guardianship and fatherly care. "He will render to each one according to his works."

The torment of the reprobate priest consists, however, less in the evils which he suffers, than in the good which he has lost. Heaven is so beautiful! God had appeared to his priestly eyes possessed of so many charms! He could have obtained for himself so easily an infinite happiness! An immense chaos separates him from the glorious home of the elect, yet the heaven of the good priest ever remains before his mind; and though forever banished from it, he can not but sigh ardently for its possessions. Such a state, says St. John Chrysostom, is a hell thousands of times more dreadful than the hell of fire. *Si quis ponat mille gehennas, nihil est tale dicturus quale est a beatae illius gloriae honore propelli.* Delightful abode, we compare thee with his frightful dungeon; triumphant

assembly of the elect, we compare your society with that of the monsters which surround him; your blessed liberty with his burning chains; your torrents of delights with his tortures. *Plus turquetur coelo quam gehenna.* Ah, he has lost more than his heaven—he has lost his God! To him the Lord has said, "Depart from Me"; and immediately the terrible threat has been carried out. "I will hide my face from Him." (Deut. xxxi. 17.) Of this punishment St. Augustine says: *Abscondam faciem meam ab eo.* (De. Civ. Dei.) Oh, with what vehemence is a soul which has seen God drawn toward Him, and tormented with the desire of being united to Him.

If, at least, the unfortunate priest could only forget that he, and he alone, has deprived himself of heaven, of God; that by his own voluntary choice he cast himself into this place of torments! No, it shall not be so. He continually recalls to memory the graces which were lavished upon him, and the favorable circumstances which were placed in his way. We imagine hearing him exclaim in his frenzy: I confess it, I wilfully lost my soul, I could have occupied one of the first thrones of heaven, and now I am at the very bottom of hell! O short time of my life, how did I spend thee! With a few slight sacrifices I could have procured an immortal glory, delights without end. I have preferred to cast myself into hell. I believe in its existence, I threatened sinners with it, I taught others what they must do to escape it. God, men, my conscience, my reason urged me to take precautions against that great calamity. Ah, what have I done? God died to save me from hell, and I am in hell! He daily offered me His graces, His merits, His mercies, and here I am, forever in hell! Ah, if I had still one of those hours which I squandered so imprudently! Alas, they are gone, they shall never return.

Why should I embitter my sorrows by useless regrets? I will think no more of all this! Depart from my memory, ye all-precious graces, so lavishly bestowed upon me during my whole life; O thou heaven of the elect, hide from my sight the bright crown of the good priest. Holy companions of my priestly life, you are now in heaven; your joys in that blessed abode are equal in extent to my torments in hell; I, too, could have easily obtained a share in your happiness!

What was there in that money, those honors and pleasures upon which I had set my affections? They were in reality the torment rather than the comfort of my life. Friends of God, I have come to this abyss by following paths more painful than those which led you up to heaven! Why is this? I think of this still! It is continually before my mind. Not a moment's rest do I enjoy from these dreadful reflections! Never can I forget what I am, what I

could be, what I must be forever! Forever I must be the sport and victim of the devils, and yet I used once to destroy their empire! I used to carry God in my hands and within my heart, and from Him I will now be separated forever! I must remain a priest forever; I must be damned forever! O ever, O never! O eternal hell! "Their worm never dieth."

A colloquy with Jesus expiring. If the thought of hell has inspired you with the generous determination which makes saints go to the altar; you will there receive a sure preservative against this frightful reprobation. "I am the bread of life. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that if any one eat of it he may not die." (Joan. vi. 48, 50.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Priests are much exposed to the danger of losing their souls! There are particular dangers for priests. From a corrupting world—from the devil who attacks the priest with peculiar fury—from the functions which he performs, which require a great purity—from his own personal sins—from the sins of others which are imputed to him.

Second Point.—The hell of the priest is incomparably more terrible than that of the other reprobates. Under a just God a more inexcusable perversity should be punished with more severe chastisement. Such is the teaching of faith. *Servus qui cognovit voluntatem Domini sui et non fecit . . . vapulabit multis. Cui multum datum est, multum quaeretur ab eo. Judicium durissimum his qui praesunt fiet. Potentes potenter tormenta patientur.*

The torments of the reprobate priest consist less in the evils which he suffers than in the goods which he has lost. A heaven so beautiful had been prepared for him! For him the most intolerable torture is that thought ever present to his mind, that by his own choice he cast himself into the abyss!

MEDITATION LXVIII.

HELL. APPLICATION OF THE SENSES.

First Point.—Application of the sight. Picture to yourself that God in His mercy favors you with a vision like that of St. Teresa, which made upon her a decisive impression; your good angel introduces you within the vast and somber abode of the reprobate. Apart from a general view of hell, you perceive therein

the place destined for you, if you will not overcome an inclination which imperils your salvation.

Hell is a region of darkness, eternally covered with the shadow of death. "A land of misery and darkness, where the shadow of death and no order, but everlasting horror dwelleth." (Job, x. 22.) Not a ray of light shall ever penetrate that dismal prison. This profound darkness of hell must be one of the great torments of the reprobate, since the Scripture refers to it so frequently. The Wise Man represents to us the Egyptians wrapped in a long night, bound fast in their houses by a chain of darkness. Things of which they caught a mere glimpse rendered still more horrible the evils which they feared. "Molested with the fear of monsters." (Sap. xvii. 14.) That darkness, however, was but a faint image of the darkness of hell, whence it had come. Behold these phantoms, whose aspect is so horrible; behold these menacing monsters; behold these souls imprisoned in bodies of fire; behold these demons employed in implacably torturing their victims!

Second Point.—Application of the hearing. Hear the moans, the groans of those innumerable reprobates; their cries of despair; their howlings; their blasphemies against God; their imprecations against themselves; with what frenzy they call upon death to come; but death does not come. Hear the terrifying claps of thunder, the crackling of the flames, and the terrible roar re-echoed through the vaults of hell. Eternity! Eternity! Hear the rich glutton asking for one drop of water, and hear the answer which he receives. St. John, in his Apocalypse, saw the assembly of the saints, whose delights were to sing the praises of the Lord; but he also saw the reprobates, whose only occupation was to blaspheme. "They gnawed their tongues for pain." (Ap. xvi. 10.) And that tongue which they gnawed revives again to utter new blasphemies.

Listen, guilty pastor, to the bitter reproaches of those sinners who would have been reunited to God had you in the least encouraged them.

Hear the complaints of those former parishioners of yours who remained ignorant because you would not instruct them; see those weak souls whom you scandalized, who declare you guilty of their loss. Hear the railleries of the licentious whom you did not, or perhaps dared not, rebuke in their disorders. Hear the insults of the devils who laugh at your tears and sufferings, just as the tyrants were wont to laugh at the martyrs. "March on, wrapped up in your flames, in those flames which you yourself have kindled. *Ambulate accincti flammis vestris quas accendistis.* They are yours, all your torments are yours; you wished for malediction, it has come."

Third Point.—Application of the smell. Imagine that you are suffocated by the infectious odor of burning brimstone arising from the pit of hell. "They shall have their portion in the pool, burning with fire and brimstone." (Ap. xxi. 8.) Add to this the infection that exhales from so many bodies, which preserve in hell the infection of the grave. "Out of their carcasses shall rise a stink." (Is. xxxiv. 3.)

Fourth Point.—Application of the taste. What of the hunger of the damned? Scripture answers: "They shall suffer hunger like dogs." (Ps. lviii. 7.) Its violence compels them to devour their own flesh. "Every one shall eat the flesh of his own arms." (Is. ix. 20.)

What of the thirst of the damned? That thirst is a consuming thirst; in order to slake it they ask for a drop of water; but eternity will continue, and the drop of water shall not be granted. No drink but wormwood and gall. "Their wine is the gall of dragons, and the venom of asps is incurable." (Deut. xxxii. 33.) Their refreshment a chalice which the anger of God has filled with fire, with sulphur and the spirit of tempests. "Flames and brimstone and storms of wind shall be the portion of their days." (Ps. x. 7.) I behold the angry God, holding in His hands the cup of His vengeance; He has mixed therein the wine of His wrath. "In the hand of the Lord there is a cup of strong wine full of mixture; He pours it out from this to that." (Ps. lxx. 10.) He compels all the sinners to drink of it. The cup is not, it shall never be empty. The dregs thereof are not exhausted; "all the sinners of the earth shall drink." (Ibid.)

Taste also in spirit all the bitterness there is in tears, in regrets, in remorse, in despair, especially when the reprobate is a priest. He has lost all, lost all through his fault; he damned his soul for the sake of mere trifles, his misfortune is irreparable.

Fifth Point.—Application of the touch. Represent to yourself the martyrs, whose burning bodies served as lights in the gardens of Nero; or imagine your own body enveloped in devouring flames as with a garment. But approach your hand to this fire of hell of which our fire is but a faint image. Who could live in the midst of these burning flames, I say not eternally, but for only a few hours? Answer, almighty God, who questions you through the prophet: "Which of you can dwell with devouring fire? Which of you can dwell with everlasting burnings?" (Is. xxxiii. 14.)

When the children of Israel saw the earth open under the feet of Core, Dathan, and Abiron, the profaners of the first priesthood; when they heard the cries of distress of those who were perishing, they said one to another: "Let us fly, lest perhaps the earth

swallow us up also." Let us also profit for our salvation, by the calamity of so many others who perish in our holy state.

Let us beware of a tepid, sensual life with all its illusions. Let us fly to the foot of the altar, on which we immolate the adorable victim; let us withdraw within the arms and the heart of Jesus Christ. Let us rescue from the burning as many victims as we can, and let us not cease to thank God for having rescued us from it ourselves, for we are bound indeed to acknowledge it. "The mercies of the Lord that we are not consumed." (Lam. iii. 22.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Application of the sight. Hell is a region of darkness; eternally covered with the shadow of death. What do they see therein! Horrible phantoms, menacing monsters, frightful demons! The sight of them, according to the saints, will be one of the greatest torments of hell.

Second Point.—Application of the hearing. Hear the groanings, the howlings of these countless reprobates; their blasphemies and their imprecations. Hear the rich glutton asking for a drop of water, and hear the answer which he receives. Listen to the bitter reproaches of those weak souls whom you scandalized; to the derisions of the wicked, the insults of the devils who laugh at your tears.

Third Point.—Application of the smell. What infection, what suffocation! "Out of their carcasses shall rise a stink."

Fourth Point.—Application of the taste. The hunger of the reprobate is, as it were, a rage. What have they to satiate it? And their thirst? "Their wine is the gall of dragons and the venom of asps." Oh, what bitterness there is in their tears, their regrets, their despair!

Fifth Point.—Application of the touch. Bring your hand near this fire of hell, of which our fire is but a faint image. Ah, Lord, if burn we must, let it be with the fire of Thy sacred love! Perfect this work of Thy mercy; were it not for this mercy, we should have been already cast into the burning.

SECTION FOURTH.

CONVERSION. TOUCHING EFFECTS OF THE MERCY OF GOD ESPECIALLY IN THE SACRAMENTAL ABSOLUTION. CONVERSION OF ST. PETER. WORTHY FRUITS OF PENANCE.

MEDITATION LXIX.

THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL SON.

After the preceding meditations, the soul has need to dwell upon the consideration of consoling truths. Let us contemplate the picture of divine mercy portrayed by the hand of the Saviour Himself in the parable of the prodigal son. We will apply it to the priests. This parable contains three distinct parts: the departure, the wanderings, the return. We will speak of the last part only, as the two others do not concern our present subject, and in this part we will notice three things:

1.—*The Wisdom of the Prodigal Son in his Reflections.*
2.—*His Courage in his Resolve and in Fulfilling it.*
3.—*His Happiness in the Reception he Meets with.*

First Point.—Wisdom of the prodigal son in his reflections. The first action of divine grace in the conversion of a sinner is to confront him with himself. It reveals to him the depth of the abyss wherein he has fallen, and inspires him with the desire to rise from it. The prodigal "enters within himself." For a long time before he had been, as it were, out of himself. To what extremes had he not been led by his passions! "He re-enters himself." A bright light has dispelled darkness; the illusion has ceased. He sees things as they are; he does not now exaggerate to himself the value of those criminal satisfactions which he had desired so ardently. He says to himself: Where am I, what have I done? Whence these tattered garments, this destitution, this hunger? What became of my wealth, of my liberty, of my conscience, of my honor? Home of my youth, shall I never see thee more? Whither have sped those peaceful days of my youth, when I had nothing to apprehend, because I had known no sin? Unclean animals, such are now my associates; the cruelest slavery, such my condition; and to linger in misery, such is my fate! Oh, how

much I envy your condition, you, servants of my father! His goodness anticipates all your wants; in his house you are filled with abundance; but I, I, his son, I perish here with hunger. (Luc. xv. 17.)

In this way does the grace of God prepare the return of the straying soul; it enlightens it. "Adam, where art thou?" Such is the language of grace to this pastor, placed in a congregation to cultivate it in peace and innocence, as Adam had been placed in the Garden of Eden. Where art thou? Grace sheds a terrible light upon the unpriestly life of this pastor, and compels him to remember whence he fell. "Remember whence thou hast fallen." (Ap. ii. 5.) It places before his mind the time of his ordination and the first days of his priesthood. He was then so happy. What delights in the celebration of the sacrifice, the performance of all his duties! He was the man of God, the instrument of His mercy; he could, when the evening came, comfort himself with the thought: To-day I consoled sorrowful hearts, reconciled sinners with God; every moment of the day was spent in works of charity.

See how different he is now from what he was! Formerly, victorious over the devil, he snatched victims from his hands; to-day he is his vile slave, loaded down with his chains. He formerly enabled souls to live the life of God; but what is now the life he himself leads? "He desired to fill his belly with the husks which the swine eat." He can now fitly exclaim in his shame and remorse: "How many hired servants, in the house of my father, have bread in abundance, but I here perish with hunger!" Devout inhabitants of my parish enjoy a peaceful conscience, experience spiritual delights in pious practices, especially in receiving communion. Nothing is wanting to them in the house of God, whose servants they are; but I, whom He called His friend, I, the dispenser of His mysteries, "I, alas, die with hunger!" O unfortunate Priest, enter within thyself, return to thy heart. Dwell upon these wholesome thoughts, and they will soon be followed by practical resolutions.

Second Point.—Courage of the prodigal son. Being ashamed of the past, terrified in view of the future, he generously resolves to repair his evil actions. "I will rise and go to my father, and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son; make me as one of thy servants: and, arising, he went to his father."

Behold the model of the repentant sinner. In place of yielding to despondency, he excites himself to confidence; but he remains humble. "I will rise." If there is shame in falling, there is glory

in rising. But whither wilt thou go, unfortunate young man? Who will sympathize with thee, and give thee a helping hand? "I will go to my father." He is still living; I know that he loves me still; from him I am sure to find assistance. I have indeed acted the part of an ungrateful wretch; but if I have been a heartless, unnatural son, he has not ceased to be a tender father. What wilt thou say to him? "I will say to him, Father." This word will move him to compassion; my tears and sobs will plead for pardon, if my tongue can not; but if I can utter a word, I will declare openly I have sinned against heaven, the witness of my crimes, but that I have also sinned against him, the kindest of fathers.

"I am not now worthy to be called thy son." He has glorified his father by hoping for pardon from his goodness; he will be just to himself by abasing himself. He does not claim the prerogatives of a son, of these he is not worthy; for him it will suffice to be made as one of his hired help. "Make me as one of thy hired servants." Finally, he is not content with vain desires, he does what he has resolved, and does it without delay. He has said, "I will rise," and he has risen. "I will go to my father," and he has left those unclean animals, and is on his way to his father's house.

O Priest, who have forgotten your sacerdotal character, imitate this model. Humble yourself first of all; humility will bring you as near your God as pride had far removed you from Him. True penance begets contempt of self, and God does not resist the charm of this virtue. *Humili homini se inclinat.* (Im. l. 2. c. 2.) If you abase yourself before Him, you may depend upon His mercy. The more unworthy you feel of so good a Father, the more compassionate He will be toward you. He will be ready to condone your sin precisely because it is grievous. (Ps. xxiv. 11.) Listen to this language, inspired by His spirit of mercy:

Quantumvis multa atque enormia fuerint peccata tua, nunquam de v nia desperaveris. Corruisti? Surge, converte te ad medicum animae tuae; et viscera pietatis ejus tibi patebunt. Iterum corruisti? Iterum surge, geme, clama; et miseratio Redemptoris tui te suscipiet. Corruisti tertio, et quarto, et saepius? Surge rursum, plange, suspira, humiliare; et Deus non te deseret. Nunquam despexit, neque despiciet unquam cor contritum; nunquam rejecit, neque rejiciet unquam confugientes ad se per veram poenitentiam. Si non desinis surgere, ille non desinet te excipere. Etiamsi, post innumera gratiae beneficia accepta, Deum (quod absit!) abnegaveris, et ejus sacramenta pedibus conculcaveris, agnosce humiliter culpam, destetare facinus, animo propone non amplius peccare, firmiter statue melius vivere, et de venia securus esto; neque enim tua malitia aut infirmitas tanta

esse potest, ut misericordiam Dei superet, quae modum et terminos non novit. (Ludov. Blos. Cap. 1. de venia.)

Third Point.—Happiness of the prodigal in the reception he meets with. God has wished to reveal to us His own heart, in the third part of our parable. Had the kind father forgotten his son? No; he thought of him unceasingly. How did he recognize him when he perceived him at a distance, in the sad state to which crime and misery had reduced him? How is it that no sentiment of indignation arose in his heart at his sight? How did he so readily forget all his faults, and think only of his misfortunes? These are the secrets of paternal love.

"When he was yet afar off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and, running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him." O my God, how far I was from Thee; how enormous appear the crimes by which I had disfigured my soul, that soul which is an image of Thee; when I come to understand through Thy grace that I was still the object of Thy love and solicitude! I had nothing to expect but the weight of Thy vengeance, and I found in Thee only the most tender compassion: *Misericordia motus est.*

What a ravishing spectacle I have now before me! The father does not wait for his son; he runs, he rushes toward this other part of himself; he throws himself in his arms, holds him to his breast, and, by his caresses and tears, he comforts that fond heart overcome with joy and gratitude

A reception so kind, so undeserved, increases the sorrows of the prodigal. He wishes to make the avowal which appears already in his countenance; but his father interrupts him. Go, he says to his servants, make haste and bring the first robes which I loved to see him wear; put a ring on his finger, and shoes to his feet; prepare a feast, let us rejoice, and let all those who love me partake of my happiness. My son, my dear son, was dead and he has risen; he was lost and he is found!

O Priest, who are now repentant, fear not to be upbraided by God, who so ardently desires your conversion. He will restore you His friendship, and with it all your rights, all the goods you had lost by offending Him. And do not give way to jealousy, you holy Priests, ever faithful to your God! You are not deprived of what you had, of your rights, your merits, of the love of your God. Your brother, a moment ago a slave, has become a king, but he has not usurped your throne; they have made him rich, but you have not been impoverished. It was necessary to rejoice, for your brother was dead, and he has come to life. "Bring in here the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and rejoice." As to thee, Priest, now reconciled, ascend the altar, immolate thyself before

the immaculate Lamb, nourish thy soul with his divine substance, and celebrate a feast in the joy of which all the just of earth and all the angels of heaven will participate.

Take your resolutions, and address Our Lord Jesus Christ in a language inspired by repentance, love, and gratitude.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Wisdom of the prodigal in the reflections which he makes. The grace of God reveals to him the depth of the abyss wherein he has fallen; he enters within himself. He remembers his past happiness; compares his miserable state with that of his father's servants. After wise reflections he forms holy resolutions.

Second Point.—His courage. Ashamed of the past, frightened at the thought of the future, encouraged by the knowledge of his father's goodness, he generously resolves to return to him. What he has resolved he immediately puts into practice. Confidence and humility, two characteristics of true penitence. He whom I offended is a most holy God, but, at the same time, a Father infinitely good. Humble yourself first. Humility will bring you as nigh unto God as pride far removed you from Him. The more unworthy you are of the mercy of so good a God, the more compassionate He will be toward you.

Third Point.—Happiness of the prodigal in the welcome he receives. The father had not forgotten his son. He perceives him from afar, and recognizes him. He does not wait for him; he runs to meet him, throws himself in his arms. He gives him no time to confess all his transgressions; commands a feast to be prepared. How consoling to know that God has portrayed himself under that touching figure, and that the conversion of a sinner is a subject of joy on earth for the just, and in heaven for all the angels!

MEDITATION LXX.

THREE TOUCHING EFFECTS OF DIVINE MERCY TOWARD SINNERS.

1.—*It Waits for them Patiently.*
2.—*It Seeks them Anxiously.*
3.—*It Receives them Joyfully.*

First Point.—God waits patiently for the sinner's return. In order to understand how great the mercy of God is in His patience toward sinners, we must remember the enormity of our sin, God's

hatred for it, and the reasons which seem to demand that He should punish it immediately.

What does man do when he revolts against God by mortal sin? "He hath stretched out his hand against God, and has strengthened himself against the Almighty. He hath run against Him with his neck raised up." (Job, xv. 25, 26.) "Who have said to God, depart from us. Who is the Almighty that we should serve Him." (Ib.) "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God." (Heb. vi. 6.) What audacity! What impudence! What wicked, sacrilegious frenzy! Vessels of anger which deserve thousands of times to be crushed to atoms; yet God, all patient and merciful, preserves their existence, sometimes for fifty or sixty years. God "endured with much patience vessels of wrath fitted for destruction." (Rom. ix. 22.) He gives them the necessaries of life, carries them in His bosom, loads them with His blessings. At this the just are tempted to take umbrage, and they complain to Him, saying: "My feet were almost moved . . because I had a zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners." (Ps. lxxii. 2, 3.) "Arise, why sleepest Thou, O Lord!" (Ps. xliii. 23.) The wicked make a bad use of that goodness, which, in their wickedness, they can not comprehend; they glory in their bold revolt against heaven. "How long shall sinners, O Lord, how long shall sinners glory?" (Ps. xciii. 3.)

They would persuade themselves that He seeth not transgressions, because He does not at once punish them with terrible severity. "And they said, how doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" (Ps. lxxii. 11.) What then? Is God powerless to take revenge? Is He unconcerned about the outrages which He receives? He necessarily hates sin, and hates it with an infinite hate. He punishes it in the eternal torments of hell, and accepts no atonement for it save the tears and the death of Jesus Christ. How wonderful is the mercy of God, who hates sin to such an extent, and is yet so patient toward sinners! "The Lord waiteth that He may have mercy on you." (Is. xxx. 14.) "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any one should perish, but that all should return to penance." (2 Pet. iii. 9.) "Thou . . overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance." (Sap. xi. 24.) His mercy withholds His arm, and forbids His angels to destroy His enemies. When the servants of the good man of the house saw that an enemy had sowed cockle in the field of their master, they came to him and said: "Wilt thou that we go and gather them up?" And all creatures, says St. Gregory, demand of God that He permit them to punish the sinner for the outrages he has offered to the glory of their Master.

Permit it, O Lord, says the sun; this ungrateful man has hitherto enjoyed the blessings of my light; I will now devour him with my fire; and I, says the earth, I will open my abysses under his feet; and I, says hell, I, that was created to punish sinners, I will torture him eternally. To all these voices which call for revenge God replies: Wait: *Sinite utraque crescere.* By striking sinners whose hearts are not softened by My goodness, I would indeed spare Myself many outrages; but My heart bleeds at the thought of it. Let them rather return to me and live. "I will not the death of the wicked, but rather that he may be converted . . . and live." Ah, in those delays, in this patience, in this love, we find indeed a powerful motive of conversion. "For as much as the Lord is patient, let us be patient for the same thing; and with many tears let us beg His pardon." (Judith, viii. 14.)

Second Point.—God seeks for the sinner solicitously. In the order of human things, the first steps toward reconciliation should be taken by him who gives offence; in the order of salvation man is the guilty party, and God the one who was offended; yet it is God who seeks out the sinner. At the time we fled from Him, His graces seemed to say to us, What art thou about to do? But soon after we heard our conscience saying, What hast thou done? He fills our soul with trouble and anxiety, places before our eyes all that is liable to touch our hearts, viz.: the uncertainty of the moment of death, the punishments of the next world, His benefactions, His justice, His goodness. He seems to pursue us in our wanderings, to bring about circumstances favorable for our conversion. What would become of us if God did not thus prevent us with His grace? O my God, "I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost; seek Thy ungrateful servant." (Ps. cxviii. 176.) But, ah, how anxiously He seeks out the poor sinner!

He multiplies parables, in order that we may understand how merciful He is. He is the Good Shepherd who leaves His flock in the desert in order to go after the one sheep which had gone astray. Where is it? Will He reach it in time to save it? He feels alarmed concerning its welfare. He runs, clambers up rocks, crosses torrents. He will take no rest until He has brought it back to the fold. (Luc. xv. 4.) This thoughtless imprudent sheep has simply followed its instinct; it stopped at a blade of grass, at a mere nothing, and, from one trifling object to another, it strayed far away and was lost. Behold, O my God, a picture of ourselves when we go astray; but how sweet to recognize Thee in that portrait of the good shepherd, which Thou hast drawn with Thine own hand! I see Thee, weary with the long journey, tormented with

thirst (the thirst of our salvation), moved with compassion or bathed in tears at the sight of our miseries and misfortunes. "Seeing the city He wept over it." (Luc. xix. 41.)

A second parable follows that of the Shepherd, and then another again; but the object of them all is to animate our hope in His infinite mercy. A woman had ten groats, and finds that she has lost one of them; she immediately lights a lamp, sweeps the house, seeks for it most diligently. By all means she must find the silver piece. (Luc. xv.) One would say, O my God, that we are necessary to Thy happiness, that all that Thou hast is of no account to Thee as long as Thou hast not found what Thou hast lost.

Third Point.—God receives with joy the sinner who returns to Him. Recall to mind the reception given to the prodigal son, the feast, the rejoicing at his return. Which of those two, the father or the son, sitting at the same table, must have appeared the more happy? And when the shepherd has found the lost sheep, see with what an air of triumph he puts it on his shoulders! *Imponit in humeros suos gaudens!* As soon as he has reached home, joy overflows his heart. He has need to share it with his friends and neighbors. "Rejoice with me," he says, I have found my sheep. O my God, we have here a revelation of Thy love for the repentant sinner! Our crimes make Thee weary indeed; but our souls are to Thee a sweet burden, when they lean upon Thy promises and confide in Thy paternal love.

But if the good shepherd joyfully receives the stray sheep, why should the repenting sinner fear to be either rejected or forsaken? God loved me when I persecuted Him; will He hate me now when I bring Him a contrite and humbled heart? He sought me out when I fled; will He repel me now when I throw myself in His arms?

Congratulamini mihi, quia inveni ovem meam quae perierat. Such are the transports of His love. His own happiness appears to be the greater when it is shared by another being. Angels, saints, glorious elect, He demands of you to rejoice with Him, when He has been able to pour down the delights of peace into a soul once torn with remorse. *Congratulamini mihi.* A feast must be celebrated in heaven as well as on earth. "I say to you, there will be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner who doth penance." But who will describe the joy of this feast, when the converted sinner is a priest! Ah, friends of God, we do not now rejoice for one victim alone snatched from the burning by the conversion of this priest; the whole empire of Satan is enraged; his project to ruin a whole people is defeated; behold piety has revived in the parish; it may be that the whole of the flock has been saved in

the person of its pastor. O blessed penance, how many motives there are to embrace Thee!

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God waits for the sinner patiently. God who hates sin to such an extent, who has so many motives to punish it immediately. What does man do when he rebels against the Lord? What audacity! What impudence! What ingratitude! Yet God bears with him long and patiently. He provides him with the necessaries of life. He carries those ungrateful men in His heart. Is He powerless to avenge Himself? Is He unconcerned about the outrage? It is a miracle of goodness. All creatures crave for permission to punish sin. He does not grant it. He waits for the sinner in order that He may pardon him.

Second Point.—God seeks out the sinner solicitously. The offender should take the first steps toward reconciliation. This is according to order. God, cruelly outraged by man, performs acts of wonderful mercy in order to bring him back and to save him. Alas, what would become of us did He not prevent us by His grace? To Him we should say, "I have gone astray, O my God; seek Thou Thy poor servant." He is the Shepherd who leaves all His flock in the desert in order to go after the one which has strayed away. The woman who had lost her groat, lights her lamps, searches every corner of the house. She must find it at any price. One would say, O my God, that to Thee the loss of a soul is more than the loss of a kingdom.

Third Point.—God joyfully receives the sinner who returns to Him. How is the prodigal son received by his father? What joy and triumph for the Shepherd when he returns home with the stray sheep on his shoulders! Joy overflows his heart; he invites his friends to rejoice with him. One would say that God's felicity receives an increase when a sinner repents and finds happiness anew.

MEDITATION LXXI.

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE. MERCY OF GOD IN THE SACRAMENTAL ABSOLUTION.

In order to understand it, it is proper to establish a parallel between mercy and justice; between the consoling effects of the sentence of absolution, and the terrible effects of the sentence of reprobation. Imagine two persons equally guilty. They have

committed the same mortal sins, and in equal numbers; the two possess the gift of attrition. The one dies suddenly in that state, he is condemned; the other receives absolution, he is justified. To one of these is said, Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire; to the other, I absolve thee from thy sins. From the misfortune of the former, we clearly understand the happiness of the latter.

First Point.—Sin made irremissible through the sentence of reprobation is remitted through the sentence of absolution. At the judgment the malediction of God binds together the sinner and the sin as with an iron chain; nothing shall ever be able either to destroy the sin or to free the sinner. By a contrary effect, hardly is absolution pronounced, when the chain is broken and the sinner set free. "I absolve thee." Sin is annihilated. How sweet to meditate on that word for a priest unfaithful to duty, but who has not forgotten the enormity of the sin committed!

A moment ago I was at the bottom of this abyss, crushed under the weight of hideous, countless sins! I made my confession with a sorrowful heart, and behold I am reunited to God and to myself! My sins are remitted. They have ceased to call down frightful retribution upon my head; they are no more. "I am He who blots out thy iniquities, for My own sake, and I will not remember thy own sins." (Is. xliii. 25.) St. Cyprian calls confession, *Anticipatum Christi judicium.* When I am absolved by the priest, I am absolved by Jesus Christ, and when He shall come to judge in His justice, He will not remember the sins forgiven in His mercy. *Veniet immemor iniquitatum nostrarum.* (St. Bern.) According to St. Thomas, the absolute secrecy to which the priest is bound in the Sacrament of Penance indicates a grace proper to it, viz., the eternal silence of God concerning sins which were once blotted out through sacramental absolution. Can I, O my God, return Thee sufficient thanks for this blessing? At the thought of my sins, which are ever before me, fear has penetrated my very bones; they are, as it were, the army of Pharaoh pursuing the terror-stricken Israelites; but if I desire it, in an instant they shall be submerged in the blood of Jesus Christ, as the Egyptians were in the waters of the Red Sea.

Second Point.—The sinner condemned to eternal fire through the sentence of an all-just God is freed from hell through this sentence of mercy. As soon as the dreadful sentence has been pronounced, every means of reconciliation has been removed from the sinner; he is condemned to dwell in a prison whence there is no exit. On the other hand, as soon as I am reconciled to God through this sacrament, I am freed from that horrible in-

debtedness! No more mortal sin, no more hell. The man who had been condemned to perpetual imprisonment, or to death, is overjoyed when he hears of his pardon. How much more should the repenting sinner rejoice when he receives absolution? Ah, how severe the captivity; how terrible the punishments destined to a single mortal sin! But, says St. Paul, "There is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." (Rom. viii. 1.) After my sin I was not in Him; I had ceased to be a living member of His mystical body; I was the branch cut off from the vine. Oh, blessed absolution that has united me anew to my Saviour, the principle and source of the true life! What a wonderful change was wrought in me through thy intermediation.

Third Point.—The sinner stripped of all his goods, and given up to despair through the sentence of reprobation, reinstated in the possession of all his spiritual goods and filled with joy through the sentence of pardon. Mortal sin had robbed that soul of her beauty, her dignity, her merits, her liberty, her peace, her life, of her ability to acquire merit. All these losses are repaired by absolution. I had squandered the treasures which I had amassed during a long life of innocence and fervor; my claims to reward, a great amount of priceless spiritual blessings; all these are restored to me. Lazarus, raised from his grave, re-enters into possession of all the property of which death has deprived him. After absolution I am the son, the friend of God, the brother of Jesus Christ, and co-heir with Him, just as I was before the commission of sin. Beautiful heaven, thou art mine, I have a claim to thy glory, to thy delights, provided I persevere. Such is the source of that pure joy, or at least of that sweet peace of mind, generally experienced by true penitents when they leave the confessional. Reconciliation full of comfort! Is it possible to know thee and to refuse one's self the happiness which thou bestowest?

Did I understand hitherto how excellent a ministry I exercise when I give absolution? Did I understand the extent of the favor I receive when I receive absolution? What should not be my admiration, gratitude, respect, and devotion, when I think of so much mercy! *O verbum salutis, verbum, bonum, sermo efficax, in Jesu Christi sanguine vim habens, sermo pretiose; Ego te absolvo, quae miracula patras! quae mala radicitus tollis! quae bona substitutis!.. Quantam debeo huic misericordiae sacramento reverentiam! quantam gratitudinem, quantum amorem! O magnum et mirabile sacramentum! fons vitae, medicina salutis, porta gratiae, peccati excidium, animarum asylum, malorum finis et omnis boni principium! O felix poenitentia! quam stupendas mutationes efficis! Perdita recuperas, vitiata restauras, mortua vivificas, restituis uni-*

versa! Felix poenitentia! tu Deum concilias, debita expungis, mentem exornas, merita cumulas, pacem donas, gloriam multiplicas. Ter felix poenitentia, quae peccatores efficit sanctos, coronas nectit, palmas manibus inserit! Jesu, salvator perditorum, dux errantium quam pius et potens es, dum facis mirabilia in sacratissimo tui sanguinis lavacro! Quis det amare pietatem, estimare potentiam, magnificare gratiam, et misericordiae tuae prodigia celebrare? O virtus! . . . O pretium! O sanguis! O gratia Jesu Christi! (Dufrene. Decem triduana Exercitia.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Sin rendered irremissible through the sentence of reprobation remitted through the sentence of absolution. A moment ago I was at the bottom of the abyss, loaded down with enormous crimes. As soon as I received absolution with the proper disposition my sins existed no more. The Lord declares to me that He has lost the remembrance of them. This absolute secrecy to which the confessor is bound signifies that God will remain eternally silent concerning my prevarications. They are wiped out in the blood of Jesus Christ.

Second Point.—The sinner condemned to eternal fire through the sentence of a just God is delivered from hell through the sentence of mercy. No more mortal sin, no more hell. "There is no condemnation to them that are in Jesus Christ." Before receiving absolution, I was no longer a living member of His mystical body; I was the branch which had been cut off the vine; I have again become partaker of His life, O what a blessed change!

Third Point.—The sinner stripped of all goods, given up to despair through the sentence of reprobation, reinstated in possession of all his goods, filled with joy through the sentence of pardon. All that I had lost when I strayed from God is returned to me through my reconciliation with God; merits acquired, sweet peace, right to heaven. O reconciliation full of consolation! Can any one know thee and neglect to obtain the happiness which thou givest?

MEDITATION LXXII.

CONDUCT OF THE GOOD PRIEST REGARDING THE RECEPTION OF THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE.

1.—*He Goes to Confession Frequently.*
2.—*With Due Dispositions.*

First Point.—The good priest goes to confession frequently. He feels it to be necessary, and understands its advantages.

I. The celebration of Mass alone, not to speak of our other functions, demands of us eminent purity. The victim we immolate is infinitely holy, the Priest we represent is holiness itself; and at the holy altar we hold intimate intercourse with Him who found stains in the angels themselves. However great may be our innocence when we offer the sacrifice, we must not fail to tremble and to humble ourselves at the sight of our unworthiness. *O quam mundae debent esse manus illae! Quam purum os! Quam sanctum corpus! Quam immaculatum cor erit sacerdotis, ad quem toties ingreditur auctor puritatis.* (Im., l. iv. c. 11.) The holy Council of Trent requires us to offer this divine sacrifice: *Quanta maxima fieri potest interiori cordis munditia et puritate.* (Sess. 22.) Now, the Sacrament of Penance is for our souls the sacred bath of the blood of Jesus Christ. Should we not have frequent recourse to it since we so often defile our souls by renewed transgressions? "Blessed are they who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb, that they may have a right to the tree of life." (Apoc. xxii. 14.)

Let us be on our guard against the repugnance which causes us to put off our confession. Whence does it arise? Whither may it lead us? "This is often an illusion of the spirit of darkness, or the effect of secret pride or a punishment of our tepidity. But whatever may be its source it is always a serious evil, a great obstacle to our salvation." (Nout.) By such delays we expose ourselves to tepidity, to the profanation of holy things, and to hardness of heart. They are the more common causes of the most lamentable disorders which dishonor the priesthood. Let us oppose to those dangers the precious advantages resulting from frequent confession.

II. Apart from the sanctifying grace which washes away our sins, the Sacrament of Penance confers actual graces which pre-

vent relapsing into them. It sustains vigilance, increases fervor, and makes a man more perfect from day to day. "When we approach it frequently and with faith we feel very much better prepared to resist our evil inclinations. We have more strength to resist exterior temptations, we free ourselves with greater facility from affection for sensible objects, we aspire with more vigor after celestial goods, and we experience that peace mentioned by St. Paul of which he could only say that it 'surpasses all understanding.'" (Berthier.)[1]

Let us not forget the virtue practised in a well-made confession. Filial fear, so often recommended in the Scriptures, is a fear which should extend to faults which we hope have already been pardoned; faith in the promises of God, confidence in His mercy; the renouncing of ourselves, but especially the virtue of humility, which makes the priest kneel down at the feet of a brother priest to confess his weakness and receive from him consolation and advice. On this account the practice of frequent confession in a priest is one of the certain evidences of zeal for his sanctification. *Cum igitur adest tempus, quod tibi piae vitae regula ad confitendum praescribit, non tardes, nec differas de die in diem.* (Memor.)

Second Point.—The good priest prepares himself well for confession.

I. He applies himself always to confess with a contrite and humble heart; and, as of all conditions this is the most indispensable, he insists more particularly upon it, for contrition is always accompanied by all the other dispositions. When he prepares for confession he will begin by placing himself with great respect under the eyes of God; then he will ask of God the Father the gift of strength to do penance, and repair the injuries he had done Him; he will pray to God the Son for the light to know his fault, and to the Holy Ghost to fill him with the fire of His love, that it may destroy in his soul all that displeases Him. After prayer he begins calmly the examination of his conscience, and for this examination a very short time suffices, if he is habitually recollected, and has been punctual in daily examining his conscience. But his principal application will be to make as fervent an act of con-

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[1] In recommending weekly confession we do not require nearly so much as the learned and pious Cardinal Bona. "*Boni Sacerdotes, vel quotidie, vel alternis diebus, vel bis saltem in hebdomada animo vere contrito ad confessionem solent accedere.* (De Sacrif. Missæ, c. 10, par. 2.)

Remember also the many indulgences which may be gained by those who make weekly confession. What a loss to ourselves or to the souls in purgatory from the neglect of frequent confession!

trition as he can by using such considerations as move him more powerfully.[1]

The true penitent in confessing his sins uses plain, clear language, desiring that he who holds the place of God may know his faults as God Himself knows them. He accepts the confusion connected with the accusation of his guilt as a slight mortification which God will bless. The confession being ended, he enters the wounds of Jesus Christ, in order to find therein the remedy for his own. He listens with humility to the counsels of his confessor, accepts generously the penance laid upon him, and at the moment of absolution, with the eye of faith, he sees with St. Magdalen of Pazzi the adorable blood of Jesus Christ falling down upon him, or says to himself that he is the prodigal son receiving the kiss of peace from his father. *Dum sacerdos profert verba absolutionis, iterum actum contritionis elicies, teque a Christo, sicut filium prodigum, osculo excipi, nova stola ornari, amplexu constringi putabis!.. Quare gratias ei ages, dicens cum propheta. "Nunc coepi," et incipies ab illa hora vitam sanctius instituere.* (Bona. c. 4.)

II. Finally, the good priest strives to avoid defects in which they are liable to fall who frequently go to confession. Father Jude thus describes some of these defects: They go to confession through habit, and almost without recollection. A short fervent prayer should always precede it. Sins are confessed in a vague, indefinite manner, confounding temptations and vicious inclinations with real transgressions. They accustom themselves to confess very trifling faults, which are often involuntary, and for which they generally have no sorrow. Better would it be to give more thought to those habits which we feel we should overcome.

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[1] As an excellent means to obtain contrition, we might read and meditate upon the following prayer of St. Peter Damian: *Rogo te, immensa pictas, porrige mihi manum tuam, Domine Deus meus, et eripe me de profundissimo lacu iniquitatum mearum. Erige lapsum, solve compeditum, illumina caecum, sana mille malignorum spirituum vulneribus sauciatum. Heu me! Qui nunquam te de me gaudere permisi. Produc, Domine, de saxe cordis mei duritia lacrymarum abundantiam. Domine Jesu, qui cavernas Tartari, divinitatis tuae radiis illustrasti, respice chaos istud, et tenebrosum cordis mei infernum visitationis tuae luce perfunde. Expelle, Domine, frigus hoc atque torporem de meo pectore, et flammam in me dulcissimae tuae charitatis accende. Si, clementissime et piissime Domine, misericordiae tuae magnitudinem totius mundi flagitia non vicerunt, numquid unius canis mortui peccata quantumlibet gravia superabunt? Trahe me ad te, Salvator meus, accende me, purifica me; impleantur amore tuo omnia viscera mea. Spiritus sancte Deus, descende in me meique pectoris glaciem flamma charitatis dissolve. Tu virtutes angelicas ad amorem tuum indesinenter inflammas; tuae charitatis incendio Cherubim et Seraphim incomparabiliter aestuant. Tu me, Domine, totum tibi vindica, totum posside, mullamque in me partem a te vacare permitte, sed solus in me vivas, meque tibi soli vivere facias.*

After going to confession they do not sufficiently remember the presence of God. He ought to be earnestly thanked for the admirable favor just granted. An excellent form of thanksgiving would be the reciting of Psalm cii.: *Benedic anima mea, Domino.*

In presence of almighty God question yourself as to the fruit you have derived from a sacrament which has opened heaven to so many of the elect. Did you seriously strive to find a holy and wise director of your conscience? Did you follow His counsels? Did you go o ten enough to confession? What was your interior disposition, your spirit of faith when you knelt down at the feet of Jesus Christ, whom we should venerate in the person of His priest?

Thy priests, O Lord, should above all purify themselves in the sacred bath of penance when they prepare to offer the holy sacrifice. Before being permitted to enter the tabernacle, Aaron and his sons were commanded to wash their bodies in the great vessel of brass which stood at its entrance; but what was the effect of that purification compared to the efficacy of the Sacrament of Penance? Yet I acknowledge it, I have too frequently neglected to have recourse to it, and alas, how imperfect my preparation! Have not I to do penance for my penances themselves? But Thy grace, O my God, shall not have spoken in vain on this day to Thy unworthy servant. Henceforth I will often and worthily have recourse to this sacrament of Thy great mercy. I have said it: I will confess against myself, my injustice to the Lord.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest goes to confession frequently. He has so much need of it, and finds in it so many advantages. Can I have too frequent recourse to this sacrament, since I am daily guilty of repeated offences? Purity of heart prequalifies me to receive all spiritual favors; but the best means to obtain this purity is frequently to bathe our souls in the sacred bath of Our Saviour's blood. Let us guard ourselves against the dislikes which cause us to put off our confession. Whence do thy arise? Whither may they lead us? Apart from the sanctifying grace which washes away our sins, this sacrament bestows actual graces which preserve us from relapse. It increases fervor, sustains vigilance, and gives us an occasion to practise the most excellent virtues.

Second Point.—The good priest prepares himself well for confession. I. His first care is to prepare to receive it with a contrite and humble heart. He prays, he reflects, calmly seeks out the sins he committed, and strives in particular to produce acts of sorrow. In accusing himself he uses plain and simple language. When

the accusation is ended, he enters the sacred wounds of Jesus Christ, in order to find therein the cure of his own. He listens with humility to the counsels of the confessor and reanimates his faith at the moment of absolution.

II. Defects to be avoided: Confessing through routine, without recollection. Confessing vaguely, without precision. Confessing temptations or involuntary imperfections. Immediately after confession forgetting the presence of God in the turmoil of temporal occupations; instead of this we should, after confession, return thanks to God, and not forget Him during our work.

MEDITATION LXXIII.

CONVERSION OF ST. PETER. MOTIVES OF HOPE FOR THE GREATEST SINNERS.

1.—*Design of Jesus Christ in this Conversion.*
2.—*The Mercy Manifested in this Conversion.*

First Prelude.—Imagine you behold St. Peter, immediately after the moment when he has thrice declared that he knows not Jesus. Notice upon his countenance the impression produced there by the look of the Saviour.

Second Prelude.—Discover to us, O Jesus, the treasures of tender commiseration contained in Thy heart. Sin has brought us death, but one glance can restore us to life. "Thou wilt turn, O God, and bring us to life." (Ps. lxxxiv. 7.) "Turn again, O God of hosts, look down from heaven and see and visit this vineyard." (Ps. lxxix. 15.)

First Point.—Particular intent of the Saviour in the conversion of St. Peter. This was to inspire sinners with confidence, however great their crimes may have been, and also to inspire His priests with compassion and indulgence toward the greatest sinners.

In the parable of the prodigal son so tenderly welcomed by his father and reinstated in his former prerogatives, we see an admirable renewal and confirmation of the promise made of old to repenting sinners, that God would so forget his iniquities, that they should not "hurt him, in what day soever he should turn from his wickedness." (Ezech. xxxiii. 12.) Of this, however, there might have remained some doubt concerning certain more atrocious crimes, which the tempter would represent as not being comprised in the law of pardon. The prodigal son was not a priest; he had not sinned in the land of the saints; his faults had not the sacrilegious character connected with those of a man consecrated to God. In

this present case he who falls and rises again is a priest, an apostle, the head of the apostles. His sin is monstrous, because it comprises the most flagrant scandal and utmost ingratitude; and yet Jesus forgives him on the spot. From this moment, Peter the penitent becomes the standard bearer of hope; henceforth, all those who, like him, will have the misfortune to fall, may also be consoled by the hope of rising as he did by repentance, and be able to proclaim to the world that there is no sin, however great and abominable, which may not be blotted out by the tears of sincere repentance. "And thou being once converted, confirm thy brethren." To Peter Our Lord seems to have said, in the language of Venerable Bede, *Infirmiores fratres, exemplo tuae poenitentiae, ne de venia forte desperent, confartare memento.*

Whilst inspiring sinners with sincere confidence, Our Lord also intended to instruct His ministers. "When," says St. John Chrysostom, "He permitted that an apostle, who had received from Him unlimited power to absolve, should himself have great need of absolution, He wished His priests to know from the example of St. Peter with what joy and facility they should grant pardon to penitents, and how careful they should be to avoid that severity which throws sinners into despair, and fails to destroy sin." (Ventura. Conf. on the Passion.)

Second Point.—Mercy of our Saviour in St. Peter's conversion. Let us place before our eyes the circumstances of the time and place of the sad apostacy, and of the person who was guilty of it. Jesus is actually the object of all kinds of outrages. He is calumniated by false witnesses, condemned by iniquitous judges, cruelly treated and outraged by brutal soldiers. Then it was that a disciple who stood by, a disciple so greatly beloved by Him, and who was bound to Him by so many promises, rejects, as a stigma upon his character, the idea of belonging to, or even of knowing Him. Hardly, however, had he uttered his third denial, before Jesus, for His only revenge, turns toward him, casting upon him one of those glances which the heart never forgets. "Jesus, turning, looked at him." Ah! How eloquent this look was! To the exterior grace, the Saviour added another, interior, abundant, efficacious. He humbles Peter and bears him up; he causes him to blush for his denial, by unveiling to him the goodness of Him whom he has afflicted. He shows him the enormity of his crime, but gives him assurance of forgiveness; He invites him to repent; He invites him to love; He fills him with sadness; He brings him comfort; He strikes and then cures.

Peter thinks he has read his pardon in the eyes of his good Master, and his confidence is not deceived. Not only does Our

Lord forget his crime, but He also restores him to the rank which he formerly occupied in His friendship. He desires him to be the first informed of His resurrection: "Say to the disciples and Peter." (Mark xvi. 7), and grants him the favor of a particular apparition before appearing to the other apostles, who had not denied Him. "He was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven." (1 Cor. xv. 9.) Could He show greater clemency?

Let us not deny our God the joy He experiences in forgiving. Behold, He says, My names, My titles, My qualities, all I desire to be to you, as soon as you will return to Me. I shall be your God, sovereignly good, tender, patient, merciful beyond anything that any intelligence can conceive. Cease, therefore, to be despondent because of your prevarications, countless and enormous though they may have been. As the darkest night disappears on the reappearance of the sun, so in the presence of My love the blackest crimes are effaced the moment you repent. "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our iniquities from us." (Ps. cii. 12.) Thy voice it is which I hear, O Lord; can I defer returning to Thee with the most unreserved confidence, and offering to Thee, as I am bound, the sighs and groans of my sorrow, the humble and sincere protestation of a reciprocal love. Since Thou condescendest still to give Thyself to me in Thy adorable Sacrament, come, avenge Thyself on my heart, as Thou didst revenge Thyself on the heart of St. Peter. Enable me to say to Thee with fervor like unto his, "Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee." (Joan. xxi. 17.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Particular intent of the Saviour in the conversion of St. Peter. He seeks to inspire men with unlimited confidence in His infinite mercy, to inspire the priest with inexhaustible compassion for stray souls. The parable of the prodigal son did not suffice to excite and strengthen the hope of every class of sinners. The prodigal was not a man consecrated to God; in our case, the offender is a priest, an apostle, an intimate friend of Jesus. His prevarication is enormous; and yet, how quickly, how joyfully it was forgiven! This conversion of St. Peter should also fill the heart of the priests with the most tender compassion toward stray souls, and teach them how indulgent they should be toward those who repent.

Second Point.—Mercy of the Saviour in the conversion of St. Peter. Let us recall to mind the circumstances of the time, of the place of this sad apostacy, and also remember the person who was

guilty of it. It was at the very time that Jesus Christ was suffering all kinds of outrages that one of His disciples, who stood near Him, a disciple so much beloved by Him, who had made such solemn promises, declared with an oath that he knew Him not. Jesus looks at him. Oh, how eloquent this look! It recalls to Peter the enormity of his crime, and at the same time gives him assurance of pardon. Not only does He forgive him, but He restores him to the place which he formerly held in His friendship.

MEDITATION LXXIV.

CONVERSION OF ST. PETER. PERFECT MODEL OF PENANCE.

1.—*He Weeps.*
2.—*Quits the Occasion.*
3.—*Repairs his Sin.*

First Point.—Peter weeps for his sin. One look of the Son of God converts Peter; as for Judas, the most pressing admonitions, the most energetic language, nay, miracles themselves can not convert him. Here is a strange but terrible truth! The one does penance and saves his soul through the reception of new graces; the other dies impenitent, becomes a reprobate, though he had received the most singular favors. Is it man who "distinguishes" himself? (1 Cor. iv. 7.) No, but it is man himself who either rejects or improves the gift of God, the very help of God. Peter is prompt in responding to the grace which inspired him; and in this, first of all, he deserves to be proposed as a model to repentant sinners.

Under the influence of a heavenly light that shone from the eyes of his Saviour, Peter rises, as it were out of a profound lethargy. *Recordatus est Petrus.*... "Great God! What did I say? What did I do? What time did I choose to offend so good a Master? What! I know Him not? I dared declare it, declare it with an oath? O perjury, monstrous ingratitude! The sad prediction has been fulfilled! I denied Jesus, I who had solemnly promised!" The light which penetrates his soul, reveals to him all the sins comprised in his denial: incredulity, presumption, negligence, impiety, scandal. *Recordatus est Petrus.*

What does he remember? Ah if, like Judas, he were to think of his crime alone, he would also despair as Judas did; but he thinks of *verbi Domini;* he remembers all that the Lord said in order to comfort and encourage repenting sinners. He remembers

the parables that are so many touching expressions of His mercy. He remembers he had heard Him say, the sick are they who have need of the physician; that He had come, not to seek the just, but to invite the sinners to repentance; but Peter particularly remembers the warning He had given him, a moment before his fall. How many recollections are evoked by this tender glance! How much he understands from that silent language! He can bear it no longer; his soul is overwhelmed with sorrow; he melts into tears: *Flevit amare.* He speaks not, says St. Ambrose, but he weeps; and his tears are the manifest acknowledgment of his guilt, and a convincing proof of his interior sorrow. They do not seem to call for pardon, yet they deserve and obtain it. Blessed tears, exclaims St. Leo, which, like a new Baptism, blot away the guilt, and remit the pain due to the sin. Grant us, O my God, to shed tears at once so bitter and so sweet, embittered through sincere sorrow, sweetened through sincere confidence and gratitude. From the eyes that shed them they spring up to Thy very throne, appease Thy anger, and draw down upon sinners the benediction of Thy love.

Second Point.—Peter quits his sin, by quitting the occasion of it. He has hardly been restored to grace, he has hardly become himself again, but he hastens to withdraw from an association so dangerous to his virtue. If, after his first fall, he twice relapsed into the same sin, it was because he sought anew the company of the tempters, after leaving it for a moment; he is now diffident of himself; his presumption costs him too high a price; his past temerity has made him prudent; he goes out. *Egressus foras.* You may perhaps say: Would not Peter have shown more courage by publicly upholding Jesus Christ, at once, on the very spot where he shamefully denied Him? This indeed might be. There would be more courage thus displayed, but also less humility. Should not the witnesses of his crime be the witnesses also of his penance? Such they will soon be; in the meantime Peter teaches us that the first duty of him who has scandalized his brother is to quit at once the place where the scandal was given, that on the plea of necessary reparation one should not expose one's self to commit sin in undertaking at once to save others. *Egressus foras.*

Why have so many resolutions, so many projects of conversion remained inefficacious? The indispensable precautions taken by St. Peter in his danger were neglected. We tried to convince ourselves that our hearts were changed, because they were moved. We contented ourselves with shedding tears when our duty was to "go out." Why did we not say, with St. Peter: Such an object caused the loss of my innocence; I forbid my eyes to meet it. That association was full of danger to my soul; I withdraw from it.

In the house of Caiphas I denied my Master; I will not re-enter it, save in the case of absolute necessity. One continues to love sin as long as he does not quit the occasion of it.

Third Point.—He atones for his sin. We have already seen his presumption giving way to diffidence of himself; we will see him through his whole life uniting a holy timidity to the most intrepid courage. Let us call to mind the triple protestation of love required of him to expiate his triple denial.

When Our Lord, after His Resurrection, asked him if he loved Him more than the others, it amounted to saying: "Now, Simon, son of Jonas, dost you still believe thyself superior to thy brethren in thy love toward Me; think you that you are more firm, more immovable than they?" In his reply to the question, Peter now uses modest language, a language far different from the declarations full of presumption and self-confidence that he used on a former occasion: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Far from believing that he surpasses others in his love toward Jesus Christ, he gives no self-assertion of the reality of his love, and when his Master asks him the question for the third time, he "feels grieved" at it. (Joan. xxi. 17.) He trembles, lest his sentiments may not be sincere, and he answers as it were in this manner: "Lord, it seems to me that I love Thee, but I dare not depend upon my own judgment. Thou knowest better than I what there is within me; rectify my sentiments if they lead me astray, grant me Thy love, if I am deprived of it." Such should be the language of the true penitent. He has learned by experience how great is his weakness; he has now no confidence save in God alone.

Peter, however, had other faults to atone for, viz., his cowardice, the scandal he had given, the grief he had caused the heart of Jesus Christ. It was in the house of Caiphas, in presence of a few persons, under the influence of a groundless fear, that he had committed his crime; he comes now to the public square, on the day of Pentecost, in the midst of a countless multitude, and then and there he boldly raises his voice. "Peter standing up . . . lifted up his voice." (Acts ii. 14.) He now fears neither prison, tortures nor death, but he reproaches the leaders and the people, the doctors and the princes of the priests for having committed the detestable deicide. "You denied the holy one and the just, . . . but the author of life you killed." (Acts iii. 14, 15.) O miracle of grace! A few days before, the tongue of Peter had shamefully denied that he knew the Saviour; to-day that same tongue pronounces words of fire which melt his hardhearted hearers. "They had compunction in their hearts"; they can not but strike their hearts and exclaim: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Peter is converted. His humility and zeal are an evidence of the fact. To the tears of repentance he must add the labors of the apostolate; neither will he rest contented until he has shed his blood as a martyr. Oh that he had a thousand lives! How gladly he would give them to this good Master, whom he had so cruelly grieved! The labors of Peter, his labors and his death, will cry out to the Saviour, louder than his voice could, "Lord, Thou knowest I love Thee." A fault which has been thus repaired has become an honor to God, a consolation to the Church, and an advantage to him who committed it. Thou alone, O Lord, canst give me grace to make use of my transgressions as motives and means to attain greater perfection. Thou alone canst inspire me with the hope of becoming a great saint precisely because I was a great sinner. Thou alone canst, amidst the tears of repentance, kindle the sacred fire of divine love and apostolic zeal. I will, O my God, imitate St. Peter in his penance, and show Thee the sincerity of my conversion, by laboring with all my strength to bring back stray souls to Thy sacred arms. "And thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—St. Peter weeps for his sin. Under the influence of the heavenly light that shone from the eyes of the Saviour, Peter seems to wake from a profound sleep. What did he say? What did he do? What means did he seize upon to afflict a friend who had so much need of comfort? Ah, how many recollections are brought back to his mind by this look of Jesus Christ! He can bear it no longer; his soul is crushed with sorrow; he bursts into tears. O my God, give me the bitter tears with the gratitude and confidence of St. Peter!

Second Point.—Peter quits his sin. He withdraws in haste from the company in which he had lost his virtue. Why so many inefficacious resolves, so many conversions well begun, but never completed? The heart had been moved, but not changed; we simply shed tears, when we ought to have "gone out." They continue to love sin who do not quit the occasion of it.

Third Point.—Peter atones for his sin. A humble diffidence of himself has already taken the place of presumption. Henceforth, through the whole of his life, we will see the most holy timidity united in his person to a most intrepid courage. When his Lord will ask him, does he love Him, more than the others, the answer he will give may be expressed as follows: It seems to me, O Lord, that I love Thee, but I dare not trust my own judg-

ment. Peter is converted; his zeal and humility are the evidence of the fact. Oh that he had a thousand lives to offer to Him whom he had so cruelly grieved!

MEDITATION LXXV.

CONFIDENCE OF THE GOOD PRIEST.

1.—*He Hopes more than he Fears.*
2.—*He Knows how to Change Motives of Fear into Motives of Hope.*

First Point.—The good priest hopes more than he fears. Confidence should occupy the first place in the heart of the priest. Thou, O my God, hast commanded him to hope.

Apart from this law, the priest has Thy promises, and above all he has Thy love! This love of Thine is so earnest that Thou desirest more than he does himself both to forgive him and to associate him with Thy sovereign felicity; it is so ardent that thou preventest him by Thy graces, seekest to obtain his friendship, as if Thou couldst not be happy without him. Finally, this love of God's is excessive. "For His exceeding charity wherewith He loved you." (Eph. ii. 4.) What didst Thou not sacrifice and suffer, what didst Thou not do, what dost not Thou continue to do every day, to show Thy immense love of the priest! But now, if God can readmit me to His love, if He is willing so to do, and if He promises it, should not I have unbounded confidence in His love, and accept at once the blessings He offers me? Many indeed are the obligations He has laid on the priest, but does He not give him admirable graces, which make it easy for him to accomplish them? Has he not the Mass? It is true that the functions of his ministry expose the priest to the commission of many faults; but He also continually demands of him the practice of those works of mercy which, according to St. Peter, cover a multitude of sins.

Second Point.—The good priest knows how to change motives of fear into powerful motives of confidence. The consideration of God on one side, and of the priest on the other, constitutes the only cause of alarm. He fears Thee, O Lord, and Thy justice, and he is still more afraid of himself. He fears his weakness, his passions, his sins, his inconstancy; and precisely because he is filled with fear, he takes wise precautions for the future. Diffidence of one's self withdraws one from the danger, just as presumption leads into it. This humility secures for him the pro-

tection of the Almighty. He shall be delivered from all peril. *Humilem Deus protegit et liberat.* (Im.)

Consider now with attention this most consoling truth. If I know how to apply to my conduct the principles of my holy faith, Thy justice, O my God, Thy justice itself will afford me security against the alarms caused by the thought of its severity. Did I sufficiently meditate upon the celebrated saying: *De suo bonus, de meo justus?* God is goodness by nature; His justice is only brought into action by my act; therefore, if I so will it, His justice toward me will be naught but goodness, love, liberality. Is there no exercise of this justice of God, save in spreading terror and inflicting punishments? Does it not also distribute most magnificent rewards? May I live, O my God, in submission to Thy law, devoted, like St. Paul, to the interests of Thy glory; thus I may say with him, at least in what concerns the rest of my life: "I have fought a good fight"; the thought of Thy justice shall be my joy, for it will owe me a crown. "As for the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me on that day." (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.)

Yes, most certainly, God is just, and in His justice and love He has given me a victim and a mediator worthy of Himself; a mediator who always prays for me and is ever heard; an advocate who sues for my pardon with authority and with the certainty of obtaining it. In a word, He has given me a Saviour, who supplies superabundantly the price of my ransom.

I therefore appeal to Thy justice itself, O my God. I offer to Thee Thy Son, who belongs to me also, for Thou gavest Him to me, and He gave Himself for me; through Him and with Him, I offer to Thee this heart of mine, guilty, alas! but repentant, and I feel sure of my pardon. Strike me, O Lord, if the goodness of Jesus is less than my malice; if Thou art not more pleased with His sanctity than horrified by my crimes. Thy justice itself does, then, fill me with comfort; Thy justice is the ground of my hope. "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded, deliver me in Thy justice." (Ps. xxx. 2.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest hopes more than he fears. God commanded him to hope. He has His promises, he has His love. As a remedy against his sins, he is called to perform thousands of acts of mercy.

Second Point.—The good priest knows how to change motives of fear into motives of hope. Because he is fearful, he takes proper

precautions; because he is humble, he keeps away from danger. God is just, and in order to satisfy the claims of His justice, He has given me a victim worthy of Him. He has given me an advocate who sues for my pardon with authority, and is certain to be heard. "In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped, let me never be confounded, deliver me in Thy justice."

MEDITATION LXXVI.

WORTHY FRUITS OF PENANCE. PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE.

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit upon it, and found none.

"And he said to the dresser of the vineyard: Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?

"But he answering said to him: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and manure it, and if happily it bear fruit, but if not, then after that, Thou shalt cut it down." (Luc. xiii. 6, 7, 8, 9.)

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ in the midst of His disciples, pronouncing twice the dreadful sentence: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish," and immediately after proposing the parable of the barren fig tree.

Second Prelude.—Thy light alone, O my God, can dissipate the darkness with which my sinful inclinations would obscure a truth which incommodes them. Thy strength alone can enable me to triumph over myself. Do thou illumine my mind, do Thou touch and strengthen my heart.

First Point.—"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none." After all the cares lavished upon me by the Lord, He might expect to find in me the fruits of an eminent sanctity. Has He found them hitherto?

Behold that beautiful fig tree with its wide leaves and vigorous stems. Sheltered by a good wall, it sinks its roots into an excellent soil; never was a tree placed under conditions more favorable to its fecundity, and yet it is barren. Am I not that barren fig tree? God had planted me in the field of His Church. "Like a tree which is planted near the running waters." (Ps. 1.) From my nativity I was placed near the source of divine grace, and I could drink of its sacred waters at all times. Did not my adorable Master water me with His sweat and His blood? Was it not for

me that He wept? Do not the sacraments which I receive draw their efficacy from His sufferings and His death?

Hardly had I come to the years of adolescence when I was established "in the inheritance of the Lord"; and He who had created me said to me: "Take root in my elect." I choose thee, I rank thee amongst the men of My right hand; go bring forth fruits, fruits which will remain. See that they be not spoiled by the worm of self-love, and forget not that there is no lasting good save that which is done for Me.

I see and acknowledge it, O my God. Thy kind providence caused me to pass from the womb of my mother to the bosom of Thy Church, wherein I was in turn fed with the milk of little children and the bread of the strong. Not long after Thou didst withdraw me from the world, to lead me into Thy sanctuary, and here I became the object of the tenderest manifestations of Thy predilection. Can I recall to my mind the singular favors bestowed upon me during the time of my clerical education? If to all those favors I add those received from my ordination, I see Thou canst rightly exclaim: "What is it that I should have done . . . and I did not do?" (Is. v. 4.) And I, in this ecclesiastical state, in this soil so rich, which may be called the "land of the saints," I brought forth naught but leaves, mere semblances of virtue, perhaps a few inefficacious desires;—and this is all I have to offer Thee, O Lord, in exchange for all Thou didst do and suffer for me! This is all the fruit of all the inspirations which Thou didst impart to me, of all the sacraments which I administered and received, of all the Masses which I offered! And yet if only Thou hadst no other complaint against me save my neglect to do good! But alas! have I not become a pernicious plant in Thy mystical vineyard? Has not my tepidity dishonored Thy gifts? Have not my scandals injured the cause of Thy glory and the work of the salvation of men?

Second Point.—"And he said to the dresser of the vineyard, behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?" The reproach is well deserved, the sentence no more than just. Should the patience of God be made the accomplice of my revolt, or an encouragement to my ingratitude? "Despisest thou the riches of His goodness, and patience and long-suffering?" (Rom. ii. 4.) If mercy sues for delays, justice demands that they should not be eternal. "Behold for three years! How much longer have I not disappointed Thy expectations. If on this very day Thou shalt visit my soul, if on going over all the branches of the tree, the intelligence, the will, the

memory, Thine all-seeing eye shall seek thereon the fruits Thou hast a right to expect, what wilt Thou find? What of my thoughts, of my recollections, of my affections? "I come seeking fruit and I find none." Hence the terrible sentence of my condemnation: Death, take up thy sword, cut the thread of that life spent in opposition to My paternal designs. "Cut it down." Why should I keep in My vineyard a tree that bears nothing but evil fruits?

I must confess it, O my God, I have not fulfilled the designs of Thy providence. I ought to have labored with Thy concurrence for the sanctification of many souls; and I have not even sanctified my own. How many hearts would have learned to love Thee had I loved Thee myself! A holy priest, situated as I was, would have done so much good, prevented so many outrages against Thee, procured Thee such an amount of glory! Hadst Thou, O Lord, withdrawn from me Thy gifts and punished me, Thou wouldst continue to be the just God, and under the blows of Thy indignation I should have to exclaim: "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right." (Ps. cxviii. 137.) But has the reign of Thy mercy passed away never to return?

Third Point.—"But he answering said to him: Lord let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and manure it, and if happily it bear fruit, but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." God in His infinite mercy grants me what is asked for the barren fig tree. "One year more," says the wise dresser. Please grant this delay to my prayer. I will strive more earnestly to correct the wicked nature of this tree; it will perhaps make up for its past barrenness by yielding abundant fruits; but if it should happen once more to frustrate your expectations, then it shall be cast into the fire.

I also have found one powerful enough to mediate for me. How fortunate I am to possess in heaven one whose tenderness and influence permit me to hope for every blessing! If such is the will of God, that every help from above must come to me through Mary, can I doubt that I am indebted to her for the new favor which is granted me? I was about to perish in my tepidity; she saw my danger, and her maternal heart was moved to compassion. "My Son," she said to Jesus, "take pity on this unfaithful priest. He has indeed too well deserved Thy anger. Thy patience in bearing with him so long has been very great. But he has sought refuge in my arms. I am his Mother still. Thou gavest him to me when Thou wert on the cross. In the days of his fervor he consecrated himself to my service; from time to time he called upon me; he had still some zeal in adorning my altars, defending my interests. My Son, I cannot forsake him;

suspend for a time the sentence of his condemnation. Let me bestow greater care upon him. Through much clemency Thou wilt perhaps succeed in saving him." Mary speaks to Jesus more as a sovereign than as a servant. The delay is granted.

O my soul, bless Thy Saviour and His august Mother; but hasten to turn this precious talent to advantage, and forget not that excessive goodness; shouldst thou abuse it, thou wilt draw down redoubled vengeance upon thy guilty head. At last, at last, let us bring forth fruits, worthy fruits of penance; let them be worthy of God and His persevering mercy; let them be worthy to atone for the sinful, miserable life which I have led heretofore, and to inspire me at the moment of death with a confidence which I will greatly need.

Now is the time to cut off the hand, to pluck out the eye; never before, O my God, did I need so much courage. From Thee do I expect it. "Strengthen me, O Lord, at this hour." (Judith xiii. 9.) O Jesus, bread of the strong, source and principle of all Christian energy, come in the Sacrament of Thy love, come strengthen my soul and help me to accomplish the command of Thy apostle: "Stripping yourselves of the old man with his deeds, and putting on the new." (Col. iii. 9.) May I henceforth be able to say with him, in truth, "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none." In imagination I see this beautiful fig tree, with its wide leaves. Everything favored its fruitfulness, and yet it was barren. Who was ever more favorably circumstanced than I to attain a high degree of perfection? Yet does not the parable find its realization in my case?

Second Point.—"And he said to the dresser of the vineyard: Behold for three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?" Thou sayest not enough, O Lord. For a much longer time have I disappointed Thy expectation. I have deserved the terrible sentence. Death, take up thy sword, go cut the thread of that life which is ever useless in the accomplishment of My designs.

Third Point.—"But he answering said to Him: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it and manure it, and if happily it bear fruit, but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." A delay has been asked for me, as it was for the fig tree. Mary has warded off the fatal blow; she has obtained a suspension of

my sentence. O my soul, bless the Saviour and His august Mother, but do not forget that His excessive goodness, if abused by thee, might draw down upon thee His mightiest vengeance. At last then let us bring forth fruits, fruits worthy of penance, worthy of God and of His infinite mercy to me; fruits of penance worthy of me also, and of my greatest interests. To detest the evil that I have done, to change my ways, to mold within me a new mind and a new heart. Behold, O my God, what Thou expectest of me. Such also will be the foundation of comforting hope in my last moments. Help me then, O Lord; at this very moment I will begin. This change will be the work of Thy right hand and of my fidelity.

BOOK II.

The Sanctification of the Priest in its Progress and Consummation.

PREAMBLE.

By associating the priests with the admirable work of the redemption, and raising them to an incomprehensible dignity, through the mission and powers which He gave them, Jesus Christ imposed on them grave obligations. We have meditated upon the first and most indispensable of these requirements, which consists in innocence of life as complete as human frailty can attain. How could they represent the Holy of holies, and co-operate with Him in the salvation of mankind, were they not delivered from the bondage of vice through eminent purity, nay, more, were they not free from the very appearance of evil in order to avoid even the remote danger of scandalizing those to whom they owe instruction and good example? Such was the object aimed at in the preceding meditations, which were intended to destroy within us sin, its causes and effects. Blessed dignity of the pure heart! It has already the privilege of seeing God; it experiences by anticipation something of the happiness of heaven. When, notwithstanding, we have reached this point, we still have to pursue an entire course before reaching the degree of perfection proper to our state. To avoid evil is merely negative sanctity. It is not sufficient for the layman, and therefore much less so for the priest.

The man of God is perfect only in as much as he has fitted himself to perform all kinds of good works. "That the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." (2 Tim. iii. 17.) Righteousness, which is his garment, should thrive in him with greater brilliancy. *Sacerdotes tui induantur justitiam.* (Ps. cxxxi. 9.) *Eluceat in eis totius forma justitiae.* (Pont.) According to St. Paul, he ought to be not merely irreproachable, he ought to be *adorned.* (1 Tim. iii. 2.) What are those orna-

ments of the Catholic priesthood? The Church makes them known to us through her Doctors. Let us hear St. Clement: *Ornent clerici animas suas ornamentis dignissimis . . . decore pudicitiae, splendore justitiae, candore pietatis.*" Where will they find this saintly vesture becoming the dignity of their sublime vocation? St. Cyril instructs us on this point, as follows: *Formam Christi sumite vestem, ut habitus et forma illius undique fulgeat et repraesentetur in vobis.* The same thought is expressed by St. Gregory Nazianzen, with an energetic precision: *Christus magna sacerdotum tunica.* (Or. 1.)

Let us priests put on Jesus Christ, clothe ourselves with the royal mantle of His virtues. Let us show to the world in His ministers the Word made flesh, our model; and in order to be in reality what we appear to be exteriorly, let us adopt His sentiments, His manners, His life; let us, in a word, be transformed in Him, according to the measure of grace which He gives. By so doing we will sustain the honor of the priestly character; we will be priests according to the heart of God, worthy of the Church, our Mother, and faithful laborers in the vineyard.

Such will be henceforth the subject of our reflections, of our prayers and resolutions. In this second section we will continually hear Our Lord Jesus Christ addressing us as He did His disciples, but particularly the apostles. "Follow thou Me." (Joan. xxi. 22.) Jesus, the amiable, infallible model will absorb all the thoughts of our minds, all the affections of our hearts. We will follow Him step by step, as a faithful guardian, from His advent amongst men through the mystery of the incarnation, to His triumphant ascension into heaven. By these examples, which are an authentic explanation of His discourses, He will tell us at all times, and in all circumstances, what He expects of our love and devotion. The virtues of the priest and of the pastor will in succession find their place in the following meditations.

There is destined for each of us on earth, as there was for Christ, a hidden life, a public life, a suffering life, and if we remain faithful there will be in store for us in heaven, as there was for Him, a life of glory eternal. The first of these lives concerns our personal sanctification, and prepares the way for the benedictions reserved to our apostolate. In this stage of our spiritual combat, we transfer to ourselves, as far as possible, the very life of Jesus Christ. The second life relates to the sanctification of our neighbor, and applies itself to communicate to the souls of others the divine life which it obtained at its adorable source. The third life gives fertility to our labors for the glory of God and the salvation of souls; for these two results are chiefly obtained by sacrifice and

suffering. The fourth life will be the reward of our generous and constant endeavors.

Whilst meditating on the first thirty years of the life of Jesus Christ, we will strive to become saints. In the last three years of His public life, He will teach us the great art of forming others unto sanctity, and we will also learn of Him the motive, the qualities of true zeal, and the functions pertaining to it. In His Passion He will reveal to us at what a price spiritual success is to be bought. Finally, in His glorious risen life, He will give us an earnest of the glory which awaits us, and the model of that intimate union with God, which is already, as it were, an anticipation of the celestial life.

The first section represented the people of God coming out of Egypt, bursting their chains with great labor and difficulty; the second will show them traveling through the desert, guided by the bright cloud, and then settling themselves quietly in the Promised Land. We will, however, spend some time in meditating on the virtues of faith and of sacrifice, which are the foundation of all Christian perfection; for without these we could not advance a single step in the following of our Master.

The following paragraphs will indicate the order and plan of this second book:

1st. The spirit of faith and of sacrifice, which are the dispositions necessary to walk in the footsteps of Christ, and enter into His life.

2d. Jesus Christ, the great model of the elect, and particularly of the priests, invites us to follow Him in the way of true sanctity; precious motives which oblige us to walk in His steps; practice of this imitation.

3d. Special virtues of which Christ gives us an example, in the mysteries of His incarnation, of His nativity, and during the thirty years of His hidden life.

4th. Jesus, by His public life, teaches us how to procure the glory of God and the sanctification of our neighbor.

5th. The suffering life of Jesus Christ comforts and animates us in the midst of the labors and trials of our apostolate.

6th. Jesus Christ, risen glorious from the dead, is an earnest of the glory in store for us, if we remain faithful, and the model of that intimate union with God which is an anticipation of the blessed life of heaven.

SECTION FIRST.

TWO DISPOSITIONS ABSOLUTELY REQUISITE IN ORDER TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST IN THE WAY OF SANCTITY: SPIRIT OF FAITH, SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE.

MEDITATION I.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.

1.—*Nature of the Spirit of Faith.*
2.—*How it Saves us.*
3.—*How it Qualifies us to Save our Brethren.*

First Point.—The spirit of faith consists in so profound a conviction of the truths of religion that he who possesses it is ever more or less under the influence of those truths; they guide and inspire him in all the circumstances of his life, just as the soul animates the body in all its actions. This the Apostle calls to "live by faith"; and this is also what constitutes true righteousness. "My just man liveth by faith." (Heb. x. 38.)

In the just man, faith does more than to manifest itself in some, or even many, of his actions; it consecrates the whole course of his life; it causes the Spirit of Jesus Christ to direct all his thoughts, his words, his affections, just as the blood courses through all our veins; it takes possession of all his being, penetrates, transforms, raises it to a supernatural state. If we let ourselves be guided by this divine inspiration, we become the children of God. "Whosoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.) The expression "are led" is deserving of notice. In the just man, the man of faith, the child of God, the principle of action is the Holy Ghost, who is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is not he who liveth, but the Spirit of Jesus Christ who liveth in him. What dignity, what merit, what perfection in the man of faith! When separated from the spirit which gives it life and action, faith is a body without a soul. It is a dead faith. St. James repeats this thrice over in the same chapter.

Therefore, to live by faith is to consider and appreciate objects, either natural or supernatural, according to the knowledge of God concerning them, as made known to us by Revelation. Hence we should judge of honors, reproaches, poverty, wealth, of everything here below, not by the light of our feeble reason, or by the false maxims of the world, but by the light of infallible truth

which causes us to judge as God Himself judges. Alas! faith is indeed common in the world; but how rare is the spirit of faith, or living faith! If I had no faith I should do nothing for my salvation; but would I do as little as I now do if I had the spirit of faith? If I had not faith I would never go up to the altar, but if my faith, were strong, would I remain as cold as ice in the midst of these flames?

Second Point.—How the spirit of faith saves us. When Jesus Christ promises salvation to whomsoever will believe and be baptized, He does not speak of a mere adhesion of our mind to His heavenly doctrine; much less does He refer to the vain admiration of His teachings which unites words of faith with the works of an apostate. He speaks, as St. Paul explains it, of the faith which "worketh by charity." (Gal. v. 6.) This faith saves us through the influence it exerts on our thoughts, our affections, and our works; it places truth in our thoughts, holiness in our affections, merits in works which are of themselves unimportant.

I. St. Peter compares faith to a "light shining in a dark place until the day dawn." (2 Pet. i. 19.) When the great day of eternity shall have come, it will absorb the light of faith in its own more brilliant light; in the meantime we are in darkness. Who would not pity a man traveling without light in the dark along a road lined with deep precipices? Now he takes shadows for realities, and trembles when there is no cause for fear; now he goes on with a feeling of security and rolls down into an abyss at the moment he imagines the road quite safe. This is a sad picture of many Christians, perhaps of many priests whose faith is almost useless because it has no vitality. It hardly casts a pale, unsteady glimmer on the road they travel, and hence follow many falls and much blindness. They call that good which is evil; they rejoice when they ought to weep. Ah! such is not the case with him who ever keeps in his hand the lamp of faith, and walks by its light. He is safe from every error in matters of salvation. He appreciates things at their value; he sees them such as they are, because he sees them by the light, and, as it were, through the eyes of God Himself. "In Thy light we shall see light." (Ps. xxxv. 10.)

II. Moreover, as the intellect is the source of the heart's affections, *ignoti nulla cupido*, if my knowledge of things united to that of God partake of His infinite truth—my affections, which originate in His own, partake also of His infinite sanctity. I esteem what He esteems, and as far as He esteems it. I despise what He despises. I love what He loves. Love and hatred, fear and hope, all are in perfect order in my life. In this manner does faith sanctify and purify the heart, whilst it preserves the mind from all

baneful errors. It reveals to me the nothingness of creatures, wherefore I withdraw my affections from them; it shows me the infinite perfection of God, and I adhere to this supreme good, and herein I find my salvation. Hence I can say as truly as David said it, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." (Ps. xxvi. 1.)

III. The influence of faith over our works contributes with no less efficacy to our eternal happiness, by imparting merit to them all, whether great or small; actions are the product of thoughts and affections; nearly all their value is drawn from the principle whence they emanate. "If the root be holy, so are the branches." (Rom. xi. 16.)

St. Paul describes admirably the difference existing between two Christians, one of whom is directed in his actions by faith, and the other by his natural inclinations only. The foundation of their works is the same, for they are both Christians; that foundation is Jesus Christ. But whilst the man of faith raises upon this foundation an edifice composed of the most precious metals, gold, silver, precious stones, the other uses in the construction of his frail building nothing but wood or light straw. A magnificent reward awaits the first, but nothing but deception is reserved to the second. The justice of God, like a devouring fire, will try these divers works. The works of faith and charity shall shine like gold which has passed through the crucible. What will become of those which had no other motive but inclination or vanity? Everything is meritorious in the life of the just man, precisely because he lives by faith. When he prays, reads, writes, takes nourishment or recreation—in a word, in all he does or suffers—he is always guided by the light of faith. In this manner he continually increases the treasures of his merits; all his works are deserving of eternal glory.

Third Point.—The spirit of faith qualifies us to save our brethren. The spirit of faith is the spirit of Jesus Christ, the truth of God within us. As such, it gives us to understand the dignity of souls, the intrinsic value of the blood shed for their salvation, the excellence of the glory of God which we procure to Him by saving them. Thereby it inflames our zeal, and enables us to suffer and do everything for this object. This spirit of faith, being the spirit of Jesus Christ, gives fecundity to all the works of our ministry; to our words in the pulpit; to our exhortations and our counsels to the penitent and the dying, it gives the strength which touches hearts, and the unction which penetrates them. The voice of him who in the matter of talent is but a child becomes eloquent and works out miracles of grace, because it is the voice of the Lord Himself. "The word of the Lord is in power: the

word of the Lord in magnificence." (Ps. xxviii.) It breaketh the cedars, confoundeth vain knowledge, and causes sinners to fall before the cross in contrition and humility. It quickens into life souls long dead, striking images of the barren desert. "The voice of the Lord shaketh the desert." One man alone, animated with the spirit, would suffice to convert and save a whole nation. *Sufficit unus homo fidei zelo succensus, totum corrigere populum.* (St. Jo. Chry. Hom. 1. ad pop.)

In ending my meditation, I will beseech almighty God to forgive me the injury I have done His glory by losing that lively faith which constituted the happiness of the first years of my priesthood, and made them meritorious. I will beseech Him to renew in me the youth of those happy days, and I promise to listen more attentively, and to follow with more docility the counsels of my faith, which are the inspirations of the Holy Ghost Himself.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Nature of the spirit of faith. This spirit of faith consists in so deep a conviction of the truths of religion that it takes possession of our whole being, penetrates and animates it. It is what St. Paul terms to "live by faith," and this constitutes true righteousness. To live by faith is to judge of things, natural and supernatural, by the knowledge which God gives us of them through His revelation, and next to regulate one's life according to this knowledge. It is to judge of honors, contumely, pleasure, sufferings, as God Himself judges of them. Faith indeed is a blessing common to many, but how rare is the spirit of faith!

Second Point.—How the spirit of faith sanctifies and saves us. It puts *truth* in our thoughts, *sanctity* in our affections, *merit* in all our actions, unimportant as these may be in themselves. I. Truth in our thoughts. Faith is a lamp which guides us through the dark paths of this life. Many shall be our illusions if it casts only some few pale, uncertain gleams. But if we are led by the light of a living faith, we shall be free from error; we see, as it were, in the light, and through the very eyes of God. II. Sanctity in our affections. If I see things as God sees them, I esteem what He esteems, I love what He loves. Faith reveals to me the nothingness of creatures; from them I withdraw my affections: it shows me the infinite perfection of God; I adhere to this supreme good. Hence I may exclaim, "The Lord is my light and my salvation." III. Merit in all our works. The work is the product of the thought and of the affection. It draws nearly all its value from the principle whence it emanates. "If the root be holy, so are the branches."

In the life of the just man everything is meritorious precisely because he lives by faith.

Third Point.—How the spirit of faith qualifies us to save our brethren. It is the spirit of Jesus Christ and the truth of God in us. As the spirit of truth, it gives us to understand the dignity of souls, the infinite value of the blood poured out for their salvation. It inflames our zeal. As the spirit of Jesus within us, it gives fecundity in all our ministrations. The Saviour Himself speaks and acts within us. This is the cause of so many wonders wrought through the ministry of apostolic men.

MEDITATION II.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH. ITS POWER.

1.—*Over the Heart of God.*
2.—*Over the Heart of Men.*

If a priest will measure by the standard of his own weakness the difficulties which he must overcome in order to save himself and his brethren, he must inevitably become discouraged; but he will be filled with joy and confidence if he will but consider the strength he can find in the virtue of faith. "Strong in faith." (St. Peter.) Is there any obstacle that can withstand a man who has all power with God and over himself? From God he can obtain all desirable assistance; of himself, he is ready to make any sacrifice demanded by divine grace. Such is the wonderful efficacy of the spirit of faith; it imparts to us this twofold omnipotence.

First Point.—Omnipotence of the spirit of faith over the heart of God. The Saviour has promised us, in the most formal manner, that no request shall be refused to the prayer animated by living faith. Let us hear, adore Him who speaks, and believe. "All things whatsoever you shall ask in prayer believing, you shall receive." (Matt. xxi. 22.) "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." (Marc. xi. 24.) They who heard these words had just been prepared for it by words yet more astonishing. "Have the faith of God," the Saviour had said, after performing miracles in their presence. "Have the faith of God," that is, a full, perfect faith, such as is due to God when He speaketh. "Amen, I say to you that whoever will say to this mountain, be thou removed."... (Marc. xi. 22, 23.) This certainly were to ask a great miracle. One thing only is desired in order that it may be granted—that in my heart there may be no hesitation, but a simple, unhesitating faith.

The Son of God continues, "and shall not stagger in his heart, but believe, that whatsoever he says shall be done, it shall be done unto him." (Marc. xi. 23.)

With this prediction, too seldom considered, compare that of St. James: "If any of you want wisdom, that wisdom which gives a relish and knowledge of things above, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men abundantly and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." This prayer, however, must be sustained by a strong faith, free from hesitation. "But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." (Ibid.) For if in prayer you have not that firm confidence which faith alone can give, if you are, as it were, tossed about between distrust and confidence in the divine promises, depend not upon the success of your prayer. "He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, which is moved and carried about by the wind. Therefore let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord." Let us notice the reasoning: Your prayer is offered with a wavering faith; therefore it is in vain.

God is bountiful in favors to those who invoke him. He has nothing so much at heart as to lavish His gifts upon us: He has promised all things to prayer, and yet there are so many prayers that are almost useless! The problem, however, is easily solved: let us fulfil the condition to which is annexed the success of our prayers! Are we men of faith? *Credentes?*

We here present different qualities which prayer should have in order that it may ascend to God, and offer, as it were, a welcome violence to the heart of God. These qualities are respect, humility, affection, perseverance; but all these qualities of prayer are summed up in the word of St. James, *In fide,* and in that of the Saviour, *Credite.* Let us believe in the presence, the holiness, the infinite greatness of the Master to whom we offer or requests; let us believe in our own nothingness in His presence, in our wretchedness as sinners; it will not then be necessary to tell us to humble ourselves when we pray, cast ourselves down, for in this case our exterior demeanor will be the natural and true expression of the profound religion of our heart. Let us believe, not merely in the incomprehensible perfections of the great God who permits us to speak to Him, but also in the sovereign importance of the matters of which we treat with Him; and our minds, were they yet more vacillating than they are, will be impressed, captivated, wholly and firmly absorbed by the consideration of matters of so grave and serious a nature. Our prayer then will be more than the insignificant homage of our lips; it will rise from our hearts like the flame from the furnace. Is it possible to remain cold when one asks for blessings like the following? *Ab aeterna damnatione*

nos eripi, et in electorum tuorum jubeas grege numerari? Let us believe in the promises of infallible truth. Let us be firmly convinced that Jesus Christ pronounced no idle words when He said, "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you." And we will not cease to pray, whatever trials our constancy may be put to, and through a holy importunity we shall obtain our request. Oh, how true the words of St. Augustine, that it is *faith* which prays, and that *it* imparts to prayer that victorious strength to which God Himself is pleased to subject His almighty power.

The miracles wrought by the Saviour are an evidence of this truth. They were always granted to the faith of those who sued for a favor, and He wants it to be known. Did He not often repeat, "Thy faith has made thee whole?" Faith it is that He blesses and admires. "Jesus, seeing their faith, said to the man sick with the palsy, be of good heart, son." (Matt. ix. 2.) "O woman, great is thy faith." (Matt. xv. 28.) "Jesus hearing, wondered. . . . I have not found so great faith in Israel." (Ib. viii. 10.) He rebukes His disciples for the weakness and timidity of their faith. "Why are ye fearful, ye of little faith?" (Ib. viii. 26.) "Have you not faith yet?" (Marc. iv. 40.) The greatness of the favors which He imparts is always in keeping with the greatness of men's faith. "Be it done to thee according to thy faith." (Matt. ix. 28.) "As thou hast believed, be it done to thee." (Ib. viii. 13.) An aggrieved father relates to Him the cruel treatment which the devil inflicts on his son, and says to Him imploringly: "If Thou canst help us, having compassion on us." (Marc. ix. 21.) Listen to the answer: You ask me if I can do this thing, and I ask you if you can believe; My power will extend as far as your faith. For to him that believeth, everything is possible. "If thou canst believe; all things are possible to him that believeth." (Marc. ix. 22.)

Second Point.—Almighty power of the spirit of faith upon the heart of man. The gift of a living faith, with all its treasures of grace, would be useless unless we responded faithfully to its voice. But how shall we obtain this indispensable fidelity? We answer: It will be through the same living faith. It acts with so much energy upon our will, that it raises us up above ourselves and enables us, as it were, to go beyond the very limits of possibility. Hence we have the saying of Tertullian: *Fides Christianorum, fides impossibilium.* What more apt to control us than the motives which it puts forth! Sometimes it restrains us through motives of fear. Are not its threats sufficient to chain down our passions? God an enemy! Eternal fire! Can any one hear this and not be terrified? Should not I, in order to escape this dreadful destiny,

accept joyfully the austerities of penance, the sufferings annexed to the exercise of virtue? *Haec quam dulcia meditanti flammas!* (St. Bern.) Sometimes it is through hope that faith animates us, and indeed what can there be more certain, what can there be more magnificent than its promises? God is He who binds Himself. Torrents of delights, a kingdom of glory, a happiness which leaves nothing to be desired, nothing to be apprehended. This thought sets the heart aglow; the labors of the journey are forgotten, in attending solely to the thought of the end and of the reward. *Si labor terret, merces invitet.* (St. Aug.) So it is with the other sentiments with which faith inspires us.

St. Paul, for this reason, speaking of the triumphs of the saints of the Old Testament, simply mentions the firmness and vivacity of their faith. By faith Abel. . . By faith Enoch. . . By faith Noe. . . By faith he that is called Abraham obeyeth! . . By faith they conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, . . quenched the violence of fire. . . They were stoned, they were cut asunder. (Heb. xi.)

What prodigies of courage wrought by the faith of St. Paul himself! Then from the beginning of the Church to our days, what sublime victory, how many heroic acts of zeal brought forth by the spirit of faith! What is the history of the apostles, of the martyrs, of the virgins, of all the saints, but the history of weakness triumphant over power, through the strength which it found in living faith. This spirit of faith sustained many priests in many dangerous circumstances, in which a false step would have swept them down into the abyss. Many others, led by the same spirit, generously broke away from the ties of flesh and blood, in order to be free to run to the conquest of souls. In a word, all the great sacrifices, all the painful immolations of self which we admire, were actuated by this living faith which is itself the principle of charity and of hope.

I must therefore, O my God, cease to adduce my weakness as an excuse for my tepidity. I have in my faith, if I knew how to use it, the means of overcoming the world with its errors, its terrors, and caresses; with it I have the power to overcome hell, and to overcome myself; with it I have all power over Thy heart and over my own; with it I can, notwithstanding the enormity of my past infidelities, rise to that degree of perfection to which I am called, and attain that rich crown of glory which Thou hast in store for Thy good priests.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Almighty power of faith over the heart of God. The Saviour has promised that nothing will ever be refused to

prayer that is animated by strong faith. "All things whatsoever you ask when you pray, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you." The language of St. James is equally forcible: "If any of you want wisdom, let him ask of God, . . . but let him ask in faith, nothing wavering." All the qualities of a good prayer, respect, humility, attention, fervor, perseverance, are naught but the effects of strong, living faith. It alone imparts this power to which God deigned to subject Himself. This truth is made evident by the miracles of the Saviour, for they were always granted in answer to prayer animated by a firm faith, and this is precisely what He wished to be known. Did he not often repeat, "Thy faith made thee whole" ?

Second Point.—Almighty power of the spirit of faith over the heart of man. Such is its action on our will, that it raises us up above ourselves. What more apt to encourage us than the motives which is presents? These are motives of fear which keep us from sin; motives of hope which animate our zeal. Speaking of great deeds performed by the saints under the Old Law, St. Paul praises their great faith alone. What wonders did it not perform from the days of St. Paul to our time? "Lord, increase our faith."

MEDITATION III.

THREE GREAT OBSTACLES TO THE SPIRIT OF FAITH.

1.—*Irreflection.*
2.—*The Spirit of the World.*
3.—*Natural Inclinations.*

First Point.—Irreflection. We have learned of St. Paul that faith is in the just what the soul is in man: it is his life; the life of his intelligence, by the truth wherewith it enlightens him; the life of his heart, by the sentiments of justice and sanctity which it engenders therein; the life of his works, which it renders deserving of eternal glory. But in order to produce these effects, it must first of all act in reality on the mind, the heart, and the will. Now, irreflection weakens this action to a great extent, or even destroys it entirely. A Doctor of the Church says that faith is a condensed knowledge of the most stimulating forces: *Compendiosa rerum quae urgent cognitio.* What thought can be more effective than a heaven to be gained, a hell to be avoided, a soul to be saved? What more touching than God loving men so far as to become man Himself, so far as to live and to die for

them? What can be more touching than the same God becoming our victim, permitting us to immolate Him, to eat His flesh and to drink His blood? O sacred mysteries, are not your burning rays sufficient to melt our icy hearts, and fill us with holy love? Yes, indeed, if we give these thoughts deep consideration. What impression will truths, though all powerful, produce on my heart, if they be not present to my mind? In the Holy Scripture, faith is sometimes compared to a shield, and again to a sword. The shield only protects him who covers himself with it; and the sword will be of no use to repel an enemy unless you draw it out of the scabbard. Not the habit of faith, but the actions which it animates give it merit and efficacy. But now, it is reflection which generally determines faith to manifest itself by actions. All Christians believe in eternity; but they alone who reflect will stop to inquire: *Quid hoc ad aeternitatem?*

I now understand how the word of God, which for the saints was full of life and efficacy, remains for me almost, as it were, a dead letter: the saints meditated on it continually, and I never examine it thoroughly; they were men of meditation and prayer, and I live for this exterior world alone. I allow faith to abide in my mind, as a fact of no consequence. I, once in a while, behold the great objects which it presents to me, but this I do superficially, like the man mentioned in the Gospel, who beheld his own countenance in the glass, but went his way, and presently forgot what manner of man he was. (James i. 24.)

Second Point.—The spirit of the world. We feel the influence of the spirit of the world, bound though we are to wage continual war against it. Reason and material well-being, such are the two idols of our age. Unless we constantly appeal from the opinions of the world to the maxims of Jesus Christ, we will often detect ourselves adopting the thoughts and language of the former, with regard to riches, poverty, honor, contempt, and the divers occurrences of life, happy or unhappy. Is it unusual to hear a priest speak in praise of these great "mere nothings" which impassion worldlings; to hear him pity those whom the world pities; congratulate those whose happiness they extol; to hear him, in a word, express himself as if he thought more of the happiness of this world than of the beatitudes of the Gospel?

If one withdraw his affections from the false goods of this world, it is often done more through policy than through a spirit of faith. Yet, says Father Jude, these words alone: "Jesus Christ said it, Jesus Christ did it," should outweigh with us all the sayings of man. In the mouth of the Pythagorasians the words "the Master said it" were nothing but the idolatry of flattery,

since it is true that all men are fallible; but applied to Jesus Christ, the same words ought to be for a Christian a first principle, a sacred axiom. Heaven and earth shall pass, but the truth of the Lord shall abide forever. Let us, therefore, be attentive to the word of the Master, and regulate our lives according to the lessons He gives us. "He hath said it": What is great before men is abominable before God. "He hath said it": Woe to you who enjoy all the pleasures of this life; blessed are they that weep. "He hath said it": He who renounces not everything and even himself, can not be My disciple, etc. My reason will tell me perhaps that these sayings ought to be explained, modified, softened down; that we can not comprehend how peace can be found in war; glory in contumely; delight in carrying the cross; but to my Master I will listen, and to Him alone. "He hath said it": He would not have said it if these things were not true, and if He did say it, He understood how it can be true. In this manner does the true disciple of Jesus blind himself, in order the better to see, renounces the w sdom of the flesh, to follow that of the spirit, thus becoming foolish in order to be wise, "for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God." (1 Cor. iii.)

Third Point.—Natural inclinations are obstacles to the spirit of faith. They strive against the spirit of faith, as the spirit of faith strives against them. No wonder that nature shudders at the sight of the immolation which is being prepared for it. It well understands its fate, if the truths of faith are heard and taken for rule of conduct. We shall have to give up dearly-loved enjoyments; to die to the world and to ourselves; to bear the mortification of Jesus Christ in our bodies. "This word is hard." At the thought of this crucifying of the flesh and of its consequences, laid upon every one who will belong to the Saviour, everything seems to be in tumult in our imagination and our senses, and when there is a question of putting those severe truths into practice, we find obscurity in what had appeared evident in the fervor of meditation. (St. Francis Xavier.) The obligation of overcoming ourselves is hardly understood when the time of combat has come. When the love of self is driven to bay it invents a thousand reasons to put off for a time sacrifices which frighten it.

What, then, does the interior man do, the man who is free, master of himself, who governs his actions and allows himself not to be led by them? In every instance he questions his faith, and seeks what it teaches. *Excutiat unusquisque cor suum, et videat quid ibi tenet fides.* (St. Aug.) This, indeed, should be done at the very beginning, for if you permit nature to take the lead,

and in this it is very adroit, it will complicate the simplest questions; it will enlist in its cause the faculties of the soul by flattering them; and when afterward faith would interpose its authority, it will hardly be able to recover its empire. Oh! how important it is to watch over one's heart, and its earlier impressions, in order to regulate its movements by the light of faith! How useful, before we determine upon or perform any action, to place before our eyes a word of the truth, some Divine maxim! "In all thy works, let the true word go before thee." (Eccle. xxxvii. 20.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Irreflection an obstacle to the spirit of faith. Faith can not give truth to our mind, sanctity to our hearts, merits to our works, unless it really acts upon our mind, our heart, our works. Now, irreflection weakens or even paralyzes this action of the virtue of faith. Powerful as the truths of religion are, they impress the mind only in proportion to the actuality of their presence. Every Christian believes in eternity; but the thoughtful Christian alone asks the question: *Quid hoc ad æternitatem?* This is the reason why the same word of God, so fruitful in the saints, remains barren in us: they reflected on it deeply, and we give it little or no consideration.

Second Point.—The spirit of the world. Second obstacle. We are often subject to its influence before we are aware of it. We detect ourselves adopting the thoughts of the world concerning riches, poverty, sickness, health, praising mere nothings which impassion the worldlings. Let us not cease to appeal from the maxims of the world to those of Jesus Christ. He has said: "Woe to the rich; Blessed are those who weep." Heaven and earth shall pass; the word of God abideth eternally.

Third Point.—Natural inclinations. Third obstacle. They strive against faith, as faith strives against them. Nature shudders at the thought of this immolation which faith requires of it. Let us always begin by asking our faith what its teachings are. Ah, how important to watch over our heart, over its first impressions, so as to regulate its movements by the light of eternal truths!

MEDITATION IV.

THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE. ITS NECESSITY FOR THE PRIEST.

1.—*Reasons Taken from his own Sanctification.*
2.—*From his Ministry and his Functions.*

The Christian and sacerdotal life considered in its development and perfection is naught else than the immolation of nature by grace, and we call spirit of sacrifice the promptness and generosity with which we offer to God so many personal sacrifices of our judgments, inclinations, and reluctances. This spirit should exist in all Christians, who are all, according to St. Peter, established priests, called upon to offer spiritual victims; but special motives require that the priest should be possessed in a high degree of the spirit of sacrifice.

First Point.—Motives drawn from his own sanctification. A priest who has not the spirit of sacrifice in an eminent degree shall never be able to turn to proper account the graces that are lavished upon him, nor to correct himself of his faults, nor to acquire the solid virtues and the eminent sanctity which God requires of him.

I. If I have not the spirit of sacrifice, in place of profiting by the graces which I receive, I make a fright ul abuse of them. The pious soul says to God in the book of the Imitation of Christ: *Opus est gratia tua et magna gratia, ut vincatur natura, ad malum semper prona.* (Lib. iii. c. 35.) This grace which is refused to no man is granted to the priest with extraordinary profusion. For what end? Principally *ut vincatur natura;* and as a rule I never make a proper use of this divine gift, except when by its aid I rise above myself, triumphing over a nature ever inclined to evil. *Ad malum semper prona.* Between God and the soul which He wishes to sanctify, there exists a continual interchange of graces offered and of sacrifices demanded. It is a *Do ut des* of every moment. How often do I feel interiorly admonished of what I ought to do or to avoid! How many interior allurements! How many inspirations! Grace speaketh, but nature also speaketh. In order to obey grace, we have to incommode ourselves, to do violence to our nature; on the other hand, there is nothing so pleasing as to yield to the bent of our natural inclinations. Depart, O Lord; offer to others the gifts of Thy love. The requirements of such a commerce are too annoying.

Such is the cause of the little spiritual advantage I drew from my readings, the exhortations I heard, the good inspirations I received during my seminary life, during my retreats, and in a thousand other circumstances. I should have reflected, entered within myself, prayed, and generously joined practice to speculation. I had consented to see the truth, but failed in courage to follow it. Ah, how many graces are lost in the life of an immortified priest, and how great his responsibility!

II. Without the spirit of sacrifice no fault is corrected. *Unum est, quod multos a projectu et ferventi emendatione retrahit, horror difficultatis, seu labor certaminis.* (Im. L. 1. c. 25.) Another passage has it, *Nisi tibi vim feceris, vitium non superabis.* The contest, which is always painful, is much more so when we ourselves are the enemy.

I was sincere when formerly on days of extraordinary grace I laid out the plan of a new life and resolved upon reform with regard to certain matters that alarmed my conscience; what is it that paralyzed my good desires, defeated my holy projects? *Horror difficultatis, labor certaminis.* My faults are displeasing to me. I am ashamed of their opposition to the dignity of my character; I feel that they jeopardize my salvation and the success of my labors; but I should have watched over my imagination, applied my mind, resisted my inclinations, subjected myself to a rule, overcome myself. All this seems to be painful; I tremble at the sight of the difficulty. Thus my life passes on, and my faults remain; they threaten to go down with me to the grave, to accompany me to the terrible tribunal. Why? Because in place of repressing them generously, I have looked upon them with nothing but criminal complacency. What would be to-day the peace of my soul, the sweetness of my hope, the facility and happiness of my communications with God, if each year since my ordination I had set upon and realized the correction of even a single fault.

III. Without the spirit of sacrifice there are no solid virtues, no sacerdotal sanctity. Virtue has not come with us from the womb of our mother; we are born with inclinations opposed to it; and its first exercise is to overcome them. I am of a haughty, independent, overbearing temper, and I am bound to obey. I am quick, impulsive, and I must live in harmony with persons of a different temper. I have therefore continually to struggle against myself.

There is a deep meaning in the use of the word "virtues," to express the idea of constancy and strength. Virtue is the energy of the soul applied to good. Virtue begins wherever sacrifice

begins. and merit is the price of our efforts. Let us be on our guard against virtue easily obtained. *Sustine, abstine.* Pagan wisdom knew nothing more perfect. Under the law of the Gospel perfection is love. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.) But this love is one which devotes, immolates itself, is made evident by sacrifices, and is measured by the extent of the difficulty. "If you love Me keep My commandments." If any one will adhere to Me, says Our Lord, and give Me a convincing proof of his love, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. (Matt. xvi. 24.)

Abnegation and immolation of self are therefore the touchstone of true virtue. Without the spirit of sacrifice all so-called piety and sanctity are simply a building without a foundation. Perfection, according to St. Bernard, is *Indefessum proficiendi studium, jugis conatus ad perfectionem, perfectio vocatur.* How shall I maintain myself in that fervor which never abates, which ever aspires to make new progress *indefessum proficiendi studium,* if I do not resist with energy the allurements of nature ever fond of rest and of comfort? We should therefore apply to sanctity what is said of the "kingdom" which shall be its reward: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away." (Matt. xi. 12.) There are other reasons, however, which make the spirit of sacrifice strictly obligatory.

Second Point.—The nature of our ministry and of our functions demands that we should have the spirit of sacrifice. The world was saved by sacrifice; Redemption is the Word Incarnate, immolated for the salvation of men; but our ministry being the continuation of that of Jesus Christ, we apply to men the fruits of His Redemption through the means which procured it. By immolating ourselves we accomplish those things which are wanting to the sufferings of Christ. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh for His body, which is the Church." (Col. i. 24.) Jesus Christ suffered in Jerusalem only, in His natural body; and since all the power of the Saviour is in His cross, He must suffer through the whole world, in the person of His priests, who are the chief members of His mystical body, so that the whole world may participate in the blessings of His sufferings and Redemption.

The life of the good priest, like that of his Master, is a long martyrdom. Filled with zeal for the glory of the Lord outraged by so many sins; and with love for his brethren, so many of whom he sees going to destruction, he may justly say with St. Paul: "I have great sadness and continual sorrow in my heart." (Rom.

ix. 2.) "Our flesh had no rest, but we suffered all tribulation; combats without, fears within." (2 Cor. vii. 5.) How shall we be able to deal properly with persons of so many different temperaments, and sometimes badly disposed? How shall we make ourselves all in all to all men, in order to gain all to Jesus Christ, without the continual practice of self-abnegation? Is there any one of our functions that does not require men who are dead to themselves, crucified to the world? It is in much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in distresses, that we have to exhibit ourselves as the ministers of God. (1 Cor. vi. 4.)

Ah, Lord, if, in order worthily to bear the name of Thy minister, I must lead a life of self-denial, I confess to my shame that I have not so far deserved this glorious privilege. I need not ask now why Thy grace remained barren in my soul, nor why I still remain void of solid virtues and full of imperfections; I need not ask why the blessings annexed to my labors were so few! I have not had the spirit of sacrifice. O Jesus, I am about to feed my soul at the altar with that adorable flesh which Thou gavest up for me to the most cruel torments; I am about to drink of the chalice which filled Thy good priests with joy unspeakable, and caused Thy generous martyrs to experience delights in the midst of tortures, in the very jaws of death. He who loves Thee longs to suffer and immolate himself for the love of Thee.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Necessity of the spirit of sacrifice. The work of our sanctification demands that we should have the spirit of sacrifice. Without this spirit I shall abuse the graces which I receive. Between God and a soul which he desires to sanctify, there exists a continual exchange of graces offered and of sacrifices demanded. In order to respond to these graces, one has to do violence to himself. One finds it more convenient to yield to his inclinations. How many graces lost in the life of an immortified priest! What an account he shall have to give! "*Nisi tibi vim feceris, vitium non superabis.*" (Imit.) The contest is always painful, particularly when we ourselves are the enemy to be fought and defeated. My life passes away, my faults remain. They shall go down with me to the grave, they shall accompany me to the dreadful tribunal, because in place of repressing them I was criminally indulgent toward them. Virtue is the strength of the soul applied to good; it begins where sacrifice begins. Place no dependence upon easily obtained virtues. We must apply to Christian

and sacerdotal righteousness what is said of the kingdom of God, "that it suffereth violence, and that the violent bear it away."

Second Point.—Our ministry and our functions demand we should have the spirit of sacrifice. It was by sacrifice only that the world was saved. We supply in immolating ourselves that which is wanting to the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The life of the good priest, like that of the Word Incarnate, is simply a long martyrdom.

MEDITATION V.

THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE. ITS EXTENT.

1.—*Continual Immolation.*
2.—*Universal Immolation.*

"Lord, how often shall I resign myself, and in how many things shall I leave myself?" (Im. l. iii. c. 37.) This question of the faithful soul has a two-fold object. When should I practise the spirit of sacrifice, and in what instances should I practise it? Jesus Christ answers: At all times, at every moment, in small matters as in matters of importance; I except nothing. The immolation of nature by grace should be continual and universal.

First Point.—Continual immolation. When we say that we should always, in every moment, be ready to sacrifice to the will of God our thoughts, affections, our reluctances and inclinations, we simply express one of the immediate consequences of the great principle of the end of man, and of the sovereign dominion of God over His creatures. As I am from Him and belong to Him, I am bound at all times to serve Him. Now I serve only God by the sacrifice of my will to His. Such is the obligation of man; but here, in the following language, we have the obligation of the Christian, and, much more, that of the priest: "He said to all: If any one will come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross every day, and follow me." (Luc. ix. 23.) To this extent, I am bound to follow Jesus Christ in order to be His disciple, and to follow Him more closely in order to be His worthy minister; to this extent I am bound to deny myself, and to carry my cross "all the days of my life."

The cross is at the altar of the sacrifice; to renounce myself is to sacrifice myself. I must ever be in a state of virtue. My nature is ever inclined to evil through a triple concupiscence: I must indispensably be on my guard against it; I must repress and

sacrifice it; *semper et omni hora.* I can not ascend to God, save in stemming the torrent of my vicious inclinations; if I cease to resist the current, I shall be carried away by the flood. When, in fact, I reflect upon myself, I find myself continually giving way to pride, to sensuality, or acting under the influence of cupidity or of some other natural affection. Without continual vigilance, continual efforts and sacrifices, I may be sometimes governed by grace, but habitually by nature; my life will be under the influence of instinct, or of reason, but hardly ever under the influence of faith, by which alone a Christian should live. To God I shall give a few moments, to my natural inclinations nearly the totality of my days. Was not this the fault I had to deplore in my preceding meditations? What losses I have incurred! What was the cause of this, if not my want of energy in overcoming myself? How many instances of trifling tribulation I could have exchanged for an immense weight of eternal glory! (2 Cor. iv.)

Second Point.—Universal immolation. Things great and small, interior and exterior, should be submitted to the law of divine love, through an entire conformity to the will of the Lord. *Sicut in parvo, sic et in magno, . . . in omnibus te nudatum inveniri volo.* (Im. l. iii. c. 37.) It is not one part of man, but his whole being, his thoughts, his actions, his sufferings, that the spirit of sacrifice should withdraw from the domain of nature, and subject to the empire of grace.

It attaches itself first to our *thoughts.* We do not sufficiently comprehend the importance of the following counsel of the Wise Man: "My son, attend to My wisdom, that thou mayest keep thoughts." (Prov. v. 1, 2.) By watching over our thoughts, we go to the very source of the evil so as to prevent it; to the source of good so as to further its development. Disorder easily passes from the mind to the heart. Perverse thoughts are not the only ones which affect the purity of our souls; we should also purify ourselves from vain, strange thoughts, which render useless a notable part of our lives, and render us guilty of a great number of omissions. *Munda quoque cor meum ab omnibus vanis, perversis et alienis cogitationibus.* If you will know what you shall have to sacrifice in order to keep within the range of good thoughts, listen simply to the words of St. Paul: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever modest, whatsoever just, whatsoever holy, . . . think on these things." (Ph. iv. 8.) Ah! how many chimerical ideas, how many errors occupied my mind in place of the truth! *Quae cumque vera.* I can make the same reflection regarding those other objects, on which, according to the advice of St. Paul, I should exercise my intelligence. *Haec cogitate.*

Our *actions* are the product of our thoughts. The spirit of sacrifice should influence them all; it repels those that are bad, it strives to perfect those that are good, especially by purifying the intention that animates them. It does not overlook common, indifferent actions, those which concern the care of the body, social proprieties, etc.; it strips them of their earthly character and raises them up by faith to the rank of supernatural, meritorious works.

Finally, *suffering* is the lot of fallen man, and has as much need of the influence of the spirit of sacrifice as have our thoughts and our actions. This spirit makes us esteem, bear and love suffering; and through these three graces it gains its brightest triumph over our nature, which ever abhors restraint and pain. In order to esteem sufferings, it is sufficient for me to consider that the Son of God chose them as a means to destroy sin and to save the world; and to remember that they come from God, and lead us to God. To accomplish this nothing more is required than to sacrifice the prejudices of my mind. But in order to *bear* with sufferings, I have to sacrifice the reluctances of my heart. I may, with my divine Master, sometimes ask that the bitter chalice may be removed; but I must always, like Him, be resigned to the will of my Father. Perfection consists in loving suffering, with all its cortège of poverty, humiliation, contempt, abandonment. Who will consummate a sacrifice so painful and so complete? Charity alone, with all its sacred flames, will be capable of accomplishing the task. Hear it exclaim in the words of St. Paul: "Who, then, shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or wickedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword?" (Rom. viii. 35.) "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ." (2 Cor. xii. 10.) Never, O my God, could Thy Apostle have found such sentiments in his heart, had not Thy divine grace inspired them. "With the grace of God I am what I am." (1 Cor. xv. 10.) Thou wilt soon give Thyself to me, in the holy mysteries, in the abundance of Thy grace.

Do not refuse me, I beseech Thee, that strength, that magnanimity, that generous love which I need, in order to deny myself in all things and at all times, and to live in Thy presence in the state of perpetual immolation, with the Lamb ever living, and ever immolated to the glory of Thy name.

Resolutions. Accept all the decrees of divine providence, all the sufferings it will please to send you, and unite them to those of Jesus Christ. Think beforehand of the occasions you may have this very day to practise the spirit of sacrifice.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Continual immolation. As I always belong to God, I must always serve Him. I do not really serve God, save in sacrificing my will to His. My nature is ever inclined to evil, through a triple concupiscence; I am therefore bound to resist it. If I cease to resist the torrent, I shall be carried away by the flood. Without continual vigilance and sacrifice my life shall be a life of mere instinct or of reason, but seldom that life of faith which is the life of the just man.

Second Point.—Universal immolation. *In omnibus te nudatum inveniri volo.* It is not alone one part of man, but his whole being, his thoughts, his actions, his sufferings, that the spirit of sacrifice should withdraw from the dominion of nature, and place under the empire of divine grace. To watch over our thoughts is to go to the very root of evil in order to prevent it, and to the very source of good in order to further its development. The spirit of sacrifice should influence all our actions, repelling the evil ones, perfecting those that are good, especially by the proper direction of our intentions, elevating actions that are indifferent in themselves to the rank of supernatural and meritorious works. The spirit of sacrifice is yet much more requisite in the matter of sufferings. This spirit makes us esteem, bear and love sufferings. In order to esteem them it suffices to consider that the Son of God made choice of them in order to destroy sin and to save the world. In order to bear sufferings I must sacrifice the aversion of my heart. I may ask that the chalice be removed, but I must resign myself to the will of God. Perfection consists in loving sufferings. How will this sacrifice be consummated? Through charity with all its sacred flames. It will gain strength to exclaim in the language of St. Paul, "I please myself in my infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ."

MEDITATION VI.

THE SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE. ITS SOURCES.

1.—*The Consideration of its Happy Effects.*
2.—*The Examples of Jesus Christ and of the Saints.*

Next to grace and to prayer, which constitute the fountain-head of all Christian virtue, nothing tends so powerfully to penetrate us with the spirit of sacrifice as the consideration of its happy

effects, and the examples which Our Lord and the saints gave us of this same spirit.

First Point.—Happy effects of the spirit of sacrifice. It purifies the soul and frees it from all the impure alloy of vanities, and of affections, either carnal or too earthly, which tarnish its beauty. It establishes intimate communion between our immolated soul and Jesus Christ, who finds in her a perfect image of Himself. It substitutes within us the will and the life of God for our own will and life. Placing us under the direction of the Holy Ghost, it transforms us into children of God, according to St. Paul: "Whosoever are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God." (Rom. viii. 14.) By the practice of the most excellent virtues, abnegation and charity, it enables us to amass invaluable treasures of merits.

It is to the spirit of sacrifice as well as the spirit of faith, which is its source and motive, that we must attribute, through all past ages, the heroic virtues and wonders of self-devotion which we admire in the great servants of God. "Give to Thy Church, O my God, many such souls immolated through grace, and the beauty of the early ages shall appear. Faith will be kindled anew in the heart of Thy children, solitude will again be peopled with saints, faithful ministers will fill Thy sanctuaries, . . . the road to perdition will be less frequented, and the blood of Jesus Christ be less polluted." (Berthier.)

Amongst the blessed results of this generous self-denial, there is one which is too seldom considered; this is the peace and happiness it procures in this life, in the very midst of our troubles and trials. There is no difficulty in admitting that the spirit of sacrifice leadeth to heaven; for in self-immolation consists the very perfection of charity. "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life." (Joan. xv. 13.) Does he not give up his life for God, does he not die through love of Him, who in order to please Him renounces all the inclinations of nature, and ever stands before Him a living holocaust? But do we admit with equal sincerity that a fervent soul finds heaven on earth by continual self-immolation, with a peace and joy which surpass all understanding? that our happiness in this world is in exact proportion to our courage in sacrificing ourselves to God? This, however, is a truth demonstrated, not by the teachings of the Gospel alone, but by reason and experience as well.

Is it not evident, on one hand, that self-denial, by repressing our unruly passions, removes the ordinary cause of our troubles and sorrows; and, on the other, that by placing ourselves under the empire of grace, and uniting ourselves to God, who is the

sovereign and the source of all order, it settles our abode in peace unutterable? "If thou hast walked in the way of God, thou hast surely dwelt in peace forever." Is it not clear that this generosity on our part places us in the most favorable conditions to receive the most abundant and sweetest benedictions of God? The martyrs are in themselves an evidence of the fact; their self-devotion rose to the highest degree of heroism. Hence, says St. Augustine, they are ready to faint for joy at the sight of their executions, and they are heard to exclaim whilst their flesh is burnt and torn: *Nunquam tam jucunde epulati sumus.* God filled them with the wine of consolations!

Second Point.—The examples of Jesus Christ and of the saints. The Source of the spirit of sacrifice, Our Saviour had no regard for tastes or inclinations, but solely for the will of His Father. "Christ did not please Himself." (Rom. xv. 3.) "The things that are pleasing to Him I do always." As He was obedient unto death, so did He carry the spirit of sacrifice unto death, even the death of the cross; and in this example St. Paul invites us to seek the energy we are in need of in order to overcome ourselves.

According to St. Paul, the life of a Christian, and consequently the life of a priest, is a racing match, a painful, laborious strife. "Let us, therefore," he exclaims, "run by patience to the fight proposed to us." (Heb. xii. 1.) And in order to reserve this patience unshaken, let us look upon "Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." (Ibid.) "He having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Through love of us it was that He made this choice, that by this example He might preserve us from the poison that pervades a life of vanity and sensuality. Think, therefore, think seriously, think earnestly of what He, the Son of God, suffered. "Think diligently of Him that endured such opposition from sinners against Himself." If you consider His sufferings as the measure of His love for you, and if you compare them with your own, your constancy shall never flinch under the weight of trials. "That you be not wearied, fainting in your minds." For you have not shed one drop of your blood in your strife with sin, and Jesus shed all His for you. "For you have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin." (Ib.)

This thought rendered the martyrs and all the saints faithful to practise the science of sacrifice. Self-immolation was a want experienced by those faithful followers of Jesus Christ. For them it was not enough to accept with thankfulness the crosses which divine providence sent them; they looked for other sufferings and never had enough of them. St. Ignatius Loyola is cast into a

dungeon at Salamanca, treated as a malefactor; his hands and feet are loaded with chains. Yet joy lights up his countenance; never was there a man more seemingly contented with his lot. They come from every quarter to see the prisoner, and after admiring his calmness and serenity, they retire exclaiming: "We have seen St. Paul in chains." His friends express compassion at his confinement, and he will accept nothing but congratulations. "Let Salamanca know it, I would wish, for the love of Jesus Christ, to be loaded with more chains than they can ever forge." Xavier complains; on what account? Because of the excess of his joys, of the paucity of his trials. "Enough, O Lord, enough! Yet more, more labors, contradictions, privations, derelictions by creatures! St. Teresa, separated from Jesus, melts into tears: If Thou, O Lord, hast resolved to prolong my exile, if Thou wilt have me wait in patience for that death which all my desires crave, grant me to suffer for Thee as long as I shall not be living with Thee. Thy cross will console me for Thy absence; either Thyself or Thy cross; either to die or be born again, to continually bear new sufferings! *Aut pati, aut mori.* When God asks John of the Cross what recompense he will have, he answers, not with St. Thomas, "None else but Thyself," O my God; neither does he say with St. Teresa, "Either suffering or death." No; he will have naught but sufferings and contempt. *Pati et contemni pro te.*

All these saints were human as we are. Whatever they were enabled to accomplish through Him who was their strength, we also can do. Let us pray, let us reflect, but let us also exert ourselves according to the motto of St. Francis Xavier, which he himself practised so well: *Vince teipsum.* By fighting the soldier becomes inured to war. Let us begin by overcoming ourselves in easy matters. Light victories will qualify us for greater triumphs. "And therefore also we, having such a crowd of witnesses over our heads, laying aside every weight and sin which surrounds us, let us run by patience to the fight proposed to us." (Heb. xii. 1.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Happy effects of the spirit of sacrifice. It purifies the soul, separating it from all impure alloy. It establishes an intimate communion between it and Jesus Christ. It enables us to amass invaluable treasures. To the spirit of sacrifice, as well as to the spirit of faith, which it its source and motive we must attribute the heroic virtues, the wonders of self-devotion which we admire in the great saints. We are equally indebted

to the spirit of sacrifice for that peace and joy which are a foretaste of the delights of heaven midst the trials of this life. Dost thou believe, O my soul, that our happiness in this world is in proportion to our energy in denying ourselves? This is, however, a truth clearly taught in the Gospel, and confirmed by reason and experience.

Second Point.—The example of Jesus Christ and of the saints an incentive to the spirit of sacrifice. *Christus non sibi placuit.* He carried the spirit of sacrifice so far as to die on the cross. In this example it is that St. Paul invites us to seek the courage we need in order to overcome ourselves. This example also made the saints so faithful in the practice of the science of sacrifice. They were not satisfied with gratefully accepting the crosses which divine providence sent them; they looked for other crosses; they were never sated. Recall to mind Ignatius in the dungeons of Salamanca, St. Francis Xavier in his savage islands, St. Teresa, St. John of the Cross. All that the saints did we also can do. Let us pray, let us reflect, let us exert ourselves.

SECTION SECOND.

JESUS CHRIST, THE GREAT EXEMPLAR OF THE ELECT, BUT PARTICULARLY OF PRIESTS, INVITES US TO FOLLOW HIM ALONG THE PATHS OF TRUE SANCTITY. POWERFUL REASONS WHICH OBLIGE US TO WALK IN HIS FOOTSTEPS. PRACTICE OF THIS IMITATION.

MEDITATION VII.

THE REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST. PARABLE.

1.—*Jesus Christ Calls on Us to Follow Him.*
2.—*Everything Urges Us to Give Ourselves to Him, and to Follow Him.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ preaching in the synagogues, the villages and cities of Judea.

Second Prelude.—Give me grace, O Lord, to obey Thy voice and to devote myself at once and without reserve to the accomplishment of Thy will.

First Point.—Jesus Christ our King calls upon us to follow Him. Let us suppose that heaven in its goodness has given to

earth a king whose excellence transcends every imaginable perfection. Not to speak of his titles, which are incontestable, he possesses all the qualities which command respect and admiration, and inspire man with love and confidence. This excellent prince, whose projects are elevated and noble, and who has no ambition but to procure the happiness of his subjects, invites them to follow him in an expedition upon which he has entered. There never was one more just or more holy; never was there a warfare destined to procure greater advantages, even to the conquered themselves. These are the conditions that he offers to those who will give adhesion to his cause; for he will force no one into his service. They shall see him constantly at their head, participating in their dangers, in their fatigues; he will be fed, lodged, dressed no better than the poorest of his soldiers; none shall be required to do or suffer what they have not seen him do or suffer before them. The success of the enterprise is certain; not one act of bravery will go unrewarded, and the fruits of the victory, which shall be great, shall be divided amongst the victors in due proportion to their exertions and courage. How will his subjects, if they are men, respond to this appeal? Will they not all be fired with emulation, with enthusiasm to follow such a leader? If any are found base enough to prefer a shameful repose to this glorious warfare, will they not be exposed to the contempt of the world?

Jesus Christ is this great, this amiable prince. Son of God, Creator and Redeemer of the human race, He comes down upon earth to battle with sin, the first rebellion that rent the kingdom of His Father and His own. He comes to establish the empire of grace over nature; and, in order to subdue His enemies, the only weapons He will employ will be blessings and inestimable favors. Full of grace and of truth, He possesses in an infinite degree all perfections, divine and human. Addressing those who become His subjects by Baptism, and those who become His soldiers through Confirmation, He speaks to them as follows: "My will, of all wills the most advantageous to man, is to attract men to Me, to make them live of My own life, and to make them partake of My own happiness. My Father has established Me king upon the holy mountain, and given Me all nations as My inheritance. I will enter into possession of My domain, reign over minds and hearts, subject all men to My laws in order to save them; and, after My peaceful conquest, I shall lead into eternal glory those whose chains I shall have broken. Whosoever in this warfare shall share in My labors and sufferings shall also share in My triumphs; the greatness of the reward shall be in keeping with the generosity of the service."

O Priest! what shall we answer our amiable and divine King? That we will follow Him? This is too little. Will His ministers do no more than the simple soldier of the ranks? Shall we not follow closer in His footsteps? We are the officers of His militia; are we not willing to distinguish ourselves by our devotion to His cause, as He has distinguished us from others by His predilection and choice graces? Yes, we will battle more fiercely against pride, sensuality, and the spirit of the world; we will offer and consecrate ourselves to the service of Jesus Christ with the utmost generosity and fullest devotion.

Second Point.—Every consideration urges us to give ourselves wholly to Jesus Christ in order to follow Him. Let us endeavor to become impressed with the following motives: The dignity, the claims of Him who appeals to our zeal, the enterprise in which we are to co-operate, the conditions which are offered.

1. Who is He who calls us? Jesus Christ, "the immortal King of all ages." (1 Tim. i. 17.) "He who could without theft call Himself equal to God" (Ph. ii. 6)—"the splendor of His glory, the figure of His substance" (Heb. i. 3)—"the head of all principalities." (Col. ii. 10.) "In Him are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Ib. ii. 3.) "In Him the plenitude of the Divinity dwelleth corporally." (Ib. ii. 9.) "All power has been given to Him in heaven and on earth." (Matt. xxviii. 18.) "In His name every knee bows down." (Ph. ii. 10.) Oh, what glory there is in following the Lord! (Ecclus. xxiii. 38.)

Jesus has, however, the most sacred claims upon us. *His infinite perfections:* If we are not His subjects, we shall be the slaves of our passions, of pride, of cupidity. The choice is between the two: which of the two services is the sweeter, the more honorable? *Creation:* All that we are, all that we have, He gave to us, He continues to bestow upon us. *Right of conquest:* From the condition of slaves, bearing the chains of Satan, He raised us to the dignity and freedom of the children of God. A thing is ours when we have bought it with our gold; it is still more ours if it was acquired by painful labors. What if we have bought it with our blood? Are we not the price of the labors, the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ? *Right of donation and inheritance:* Since the Father has "constituted him His universal heir. *Election and free agreement on our part:* We chose Christ ourselves for our King, both at our Baptism and many other times since, as in presence of heaven and earth we renewed the vow of being wholly His and forever. Behold the ties which bind us to Jesus Christ.

II. What are we asked to do? To join in the noble, the holiest of projects, of surpassing magnitude in all its aspects. The enemies we are to fight: The devil, the world, the passions, our own hearts. The weapons to be used: Faith, prayer, humility, patience. All the virtues of the Christian, of the apostle. Our companions in the fight: All the generous souls which the Christian religion has elevated, aggrandized, and in some way deified. The saints of all conditions. The chieftain: The Son of God in person, battling in us by His grace, who, having already conquered in so many saints, wishes to be victor in each of us, and then make use of us to gain the hearts of our brethren. Finally, the end of the enterprise: This end is to glorify God, and to save men, by destroying error and vice in order to establish truth and virtue. Can you imagine anything more excellent?

III. The conditions which are offered are as follows: To share here below the labors and trials of Jesus Christ, in order to be thereafter associated in His triumphs. Compare the sacrifices He demands of us with those which He imposed on Himself. For Him alone the cross was without alleviation, but as to His faithful disciples and priests, He lightens the burden: "I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulations." (2 Cor. vii. 4.) Let us compare the pains and duration of the combat with the joys and the eternity of the triumph.

Let us consecrate ourselves fully to the service of the Saviour, and say to Him, "Behold me, O supreme Monarch and Lord of all things. Unworthy though I am to appear before Thee, and to belong to Thee, yet full of confidence in Thy grace and protection, I give myself to Thee without reserve. All that I am, all that I possess, I submit and entirely give up to Thy sacred will. I declare before Thy infinite goodness, taking to witness the glorious Virgin, Thy Mother, with all the heavenly court, that my desire, my unalterable resolution, my determined will, is to follow Thee as closely as possible, detached in spirit from the things of earth, and if Thou shouldst will it, in poverty and humility of heart, and if that also be Thy will, partaking of all Thy humiliations and all Thy ignominies, living and dying at the post where the interests of Thy glory, and my salvation, and Thy divine call may have placed me." (St. Ign. Exerc.) This offering of yourself will be a good preparation for holy Mass. Renew the same in your thanksgiving.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ, our King, calls upon us to follow Him. A monarch more perfect can not be imagined. His claims

are incontestable. He possesses all the qualities that command admiration, love, and confidence; invites His subjects to follow Him in a warfare entirely just, holy, infinitely advantageous to the very persons that are to be conquered. He will be constantly at the head of His soldiers, being fed, lodged, and clothed as the least amongst them. Success is assured, and the fruits of the victory, which will be enormous, shall be divided according to merit amongst the soldiers. This great, this amiable prince, is Jesus Christ. He comes to fight against sin, to subject sinners to God and to save them. O Priest, He placed you in the front rank in His militia! Will you not walk more faithfully than others in His steps?

Second Point.—Everything urges us to give ourselves entirely to Jesus Christ and follow Him. Our chieftain is "the immortal King of ages, the splendor" of the glory of God. In His name every knee bends. His claims upon us are of the most sacred kind. His perfections, His rights as our creator, our conqueror. We are His inheritance. We have elected Him voluntarily. He calls upon us to join Him in the noblest project that can be imagined. Everything connected with this expedition is stupendous. The enemies, the weapons, the companions, the chieftain. Its object is to glorify God and to save the world. Here are the conditions demanded: To share here on earth the labors and trials of Jesus Christ in order to participate in His glory in the next world. Let us consecrate ourselves entirely to His service.

MEDITATION VIII.

THE REIGN OF JESUS CHRIST WITHIN THE FAITHFUL SOUL.

1.—*Nature of this Reign.*
2.—*It should be My Desire to See it Established within Me.*

First Point.—What is the reign of Jesus Christ within me? "It is the Gospel of the Son of God governing my heart always and at all times, and hence guiding the intellect, the tongue, all my actions, the order and plan of my life." (Martet.) In this condition my heart is in a true sense the throne of Jesus Christ. Everything within me receives with due submission the behests of this great King; everything is placed at His service, to be employed by Him for the glory of His Father. It was indeed for this purpose that He made the purchase of my whole being.

This reign of Jesus Christ consists in so guiding me by His spirit that it becomes the rule of my judgment, of my affections and will. Under its influence I follow in everything the inspirations and impressions of His grace; and through the good use I make of these, I acquire all the virtues which the Saviour taught us by word and example. True, I shall ever have to say with St. Paul, "I see another law in my members fighting against the law of my mind, and captivating me in the law of sin, that is in my members." Yet it still remains in my power to say to Him, "I have another law within myself"; it is the law of the spirit of Jesus, which reigns over my disorderly appetites, represses and keeps them under restraint, so that "I live, not I, but Jesus Christ liveth within me." (Gal. ii. 20.) My vices must give way to His virtues, my pride to humility, my attachment to riches to His poverty, my irascibility to His patience, my anger to His meekness. He must so dispose at will of my time and of my strength, of my joys and of my sorrows that my will may never give any resistance to His. Then only will Jesus reign within me and over me, as a sovereign master. Has it been so with me hitherto? Oh, how many obstacles I oppose to the exercise of this holy and kind royalty!

Second Point.—I should desire to see the reign of Jesus Christ perfectly established within me. When I meditate on the necessity of submitting to the sway of Jesus Christ, I see clearly that I can not reign with Him in His glory, unless He shall have reigned over me by His grace. If He be not my King through the mercy which forgives and saves, He shall be my Master through the dreadful justice which condemns and destroys. Now, however, I consider only the attractiveness of this excellent King, and the happiness of His subjects. Amiable in its power, blessed in its laws, glorious in the dignity to which it elevates me, meek in its government—such is the reign of my Saviour which I often rejected when I should have ardently desired it. "With Thy comeliness and Thy beauty set out, proceed prosperously and reign."

I. The reign of Christ is amiable in its power, for it renders sweet and light a yoke which human passions will ever consider as too burdensome. Is there anything, humanly speaking, so difficult to establish as an order of things in which man, who is so fond of himself, and who often loves nothing but himself, must take up arms against himself, and wage a constant warfare against his senses and his most violent inclinations? The power of Jesus Christ achieves all this. It reaches further yet, and here are some of its wonderful effects: It induces man to take upon himself this

yoke; giving him grace to love it, nay to prefer it to thrones and to crowns. Behold a man who in all things overcomes himself in order to be always dependent on God; he loves this dependence and this warfare, and in order to carry this yoke he sacrifices every inducement that the world can offer. How has he been enabled to perform actions so contrary to his inclinations? This is the effect of the interior reign of Christ in our hearts, a reign as amiable as it is powerful and absolute.

II. The reign of Christ admirable in its laws. "Come to Me, all you who labor." Do you desire happiness? "Come to Me," Our Lord says: take up My yoke, practise the teachings of My Gospel. Here is a compendium of them: "Deny yourself, carry your cross every day, and walk after Me." In order to find joy in tears, amidst calumnies, outrages, crosses of all kinds, one must follow Jesus, submit to His laws, live according to His maxims. The wonderful privilege of enjoying sweetness in bitterness, joy in sufferings, is promised on this condition alone, and we challenge any man to show that the condition was ever fulfilled without being rewarded by real happiness. Thou dost declare it to me, O my God; Thy greatest saints also declare that they have experienced it. Why should I refuse to make the experiment myself?

III. This reign is glorious in the dignity to which it elevates me. Of Jesus alone it can be said that His servants are kings, and greater than kings. Is there a monarch, be he ever so powerful, who is not the slave of some passion or interest? The slave of circumstances or events? Nay, the slave of his own subjects, on whom he depends in a thousand ways? Let this slave king, master as he may be, submit fully to Jesus Christ, living henceforth according to the maxims of Jesus Christ; and He is more than king, he is the friend of God, the son of God, the brother of Jesus Christ, and co-heir with Him. No power governs or guides him but God alone, whom he sees, whom he hears, whom he obeys in everything. He can henceforth say with St. Paul, "All things are lawful to me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." (1 Cor. vi. 12.) He loves God, he has no will other than the will of God; he can therefore do all that he wills: *Ama, et fac quod vis.* What glory! Where can we find a nobler independence than in our submission to our great and divine King?

IV. A reign full of meekness in its government. Not in vain was Jesus named *Rex pacificus, rex mansuetus, princeps pacis.* He says to the winds, "Peace," to the sea, "be still"; and the winds cease and the tempest is appeased. How could He come, reside in our hearts and not bring with Him peace and tranquillity?

The world itself admires these happy transformations, which are operated in those whom divine grace has touched and converted. It wonders to see them as patient as they were irritable, as joyful as they were despondent. They have placed themselves under the sweet authority of Jesus Christ.

Too often, O my Saviour, have I proclaimed by my criminal life that I did "not want Thee to reign over me." Ah, on this day and on every day of my life, I will have no other king than Thee. I now renew this promise which I have so often forgotten, and when in a few moments I will possess Thee in the Sacrament of my love, I will repeat it to Thee with yet greater joy: O Jesus, reign over me; reign over my mind, over my heart, over my thoughts and affections; grant me this grace, O my Lord, that in life and in death I may always be submissive to Thee, always near Thee through the practise of Thy law, and the imitation of Thy virtues. "As the Lord liveth, and as my Lord the king liveth, in what place soever Thou shalt be, Lord my king, either in death or in life, there will Thy servant be." (2 Reg. xv. 21.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What is the reign of Jesus Christ within me? It consists in so governing myself according to the Gospel, that all its maxims are the rule of my conduct. In always following the lights and impressions of grace, placing the life of Jesus Christ within me, so that His virtues will take the place of my vices, His humility of my pride. I must permit Him to dispose as He will of my time, of my strength. His will should find no resistance in my will. Ah, how many obstacles I have put heretofore in the way of this most kind royalty!

Second Point.—I should ardently desire the perfect reign of Jesus Christ within me. The perfections of this reign are wonderful. The power of Jesus Christ goes so far as to cause men to accept a yoke which would seem intolerable to their passions; it goes further, it makes them love it, and prefer it to thrones and crowns. This reign is admirable in its laws. The wonderful privilege of finding sweetness in bitterness, joy in suffering, is promised on one condition only, and that is, to subject one's self to the laws and the examples of Jesus Christ; but, on the other hand, never was that condition fulfilled without finding true happiness. This reign is glorious, because of the dignity to which it elevates me. Of Jesus alone it can be said, that His servants are kings. They love God, they have no other will than His, they can therefore do as they will. A reign full of meekness in its government: Jesus is the *peaceful*

King. How could he come and dwell in my heart and not bring with Him peace and tranquillity? O Jesus, reign over me, over my mind, over my heart. Grant me this grace, O my Lord, that in life and in death, I may be always submissive to Thee through the practise of love and the imitation of Thy virtues.

MEDITATION IX.

IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. ITS NECESSITY.

1.—*As a Christian.*
2.—*Especially as a Priest.*

Jesus Christ is not King, said St. Augustine, in order to lay tribute upon His subjects, or put arms in their hands, and lead them to temporal conquests, but He is King in order to guide souls, to lead them in the ways of God, and secure their salvation, and this He does by the practice of faith, hope, and charity. Our first duty is to serve Him by following Him. In this imitation is contained all the spirit of the Christian religion, and of the priesthood.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Our Lord Jesus Christ, after washing the feet of His apostles, thus addressing them: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, you do also." (Joan. xiii. 15.)

Second Prelude.—O Jesus, enable me to understand, to love, and faithfully accomplish the obligation of walking in Thy footsteps. "D aw me: we will run after Thee, to the odor of Thy ointments." (Cant. i. 3.)

First Point.—Obligation of following Jesus Christ as Christians, of taking the Gospel for the rule of life, and Jesus Christ for a model; such is the significance of the great name of Christian. He alone deserves to bear it, says St. Cyprian, who is imbued as far as possible with the sentiments, the manners, the life of Jesus Christ. *Christianus nemo dicitur recte, nisi qui Christo moribus, quoad valeat, coacquatur.* According to St. Basil: *Definitio christianismi est imitatio Christi.* I can not be a Christian, says St. Malachy, if I am not an imitator of Christ. *Sine causa sum christianus, si Chr stum non sequor.*

In Baptism we renounce the devil and his works, the world with its maxims and pomps, in order that being freed from every fetter, we may unite ourselves to the Saviour, through a perfect imitation. We clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ. "As many of

you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ." (Gal. iii. 27.) If Jesus Christ be our garment, says St. Bernard, He must be visible in our person. Let us therefore show forth His charity, His meekness, His patience, all His virtues. The great Apostle would have us reproduce so perfectly all the traits of this divine model, that his life might be recognized in our bodies. "That the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies." (2 Cor. iv. 10.) Let us listen to the words of Our Lord Jesus Himself: "You call me Lord and Master, you do well, for so I am; if I, therefore, your Lord and Master, washed your feet, you must do the same, one to another." Let us penetrate ourselves with this consideration. "I have given you an example, that you may do as I have done." One becomes a disciple of other masters by listening to their words; to be My disciple is to imitate Me. The chief duty of the disciple is to learn from his master. "Learn of Me therefore." What shall I learn? Not so much truths expressed by words, as truths exemplified by deeds; not so much the things that are to be said as those that are to be done. The life that I lead, such is the great science which I am to teach: "Learn of Me because I am meek." To resemble Jesus Christ, to become what He is by imitation of Him; such is the substance of Christianity; but now where are the Christians?

Second Point.—More strict obligation of the priest to imitate Jesus Christ. Let us call to mind our titles and our functions.

I. Our titles—we are named the ministers, ambassadors, vicars of Jesus Christ, pastors of souls. St. Cyprian calls the priest, *Sacerdos Christi figura expressaque forma.*

The kings of the earth lay many obligations upon their *ministers;* the King of heaven lays but one upon His; but this one obligation comprises all the others. Follow your Master, imitate Him in His virtues, in His labors and sufferings for the glory of God and the salvation of man. "If any man minister to Me let him follow Me." (Joan. xii. 12.) "*Sane minister Domini Dominum imitetur, quia ipse ait: Qui mihi ministrat.*" (St. Ber. de Consid.) As *ambassador* of the Son of God, I must inspire men with a sovereign esteem for His infinite greatness, I should impart to them a knowledge of His sanctity, His sweet mercy. I should represent Him, show Him to the world, and if I fail in this, I both compromise His honor and the success of my divine mission. Now, I can not represent Jesus Christ except by imitating Him. As His *vicar,* I should take His place. *Vicarius Christi, vicem Christi gerere debet.* (St. Bonav.) When and how? Should it be merely in the exercise of His authority? I should also represent Him by reproducing His virtues. *In similitudinis ejus repraesentatione.* (Idem.) Men

should have a right to say when they see and hear me: Thus it was that He lived, that He spoke and acted. *Nonne sicut conversatus est, et vos vicarii ejus debetis conversari?* (St. Bern.) Finally, as pastor, I should be the model of my flock. *Forma facti gregis.* I can be their model only so far as Christ is mine. I am bound to go *before my sheep.* (Joan. x. 4.) Woe to me if by following me, they follow not the Son of God!

Fearing, as it were, lest the faithful might lose the trace of His footsteps, the Saviour placed His priest between Himself and them, ordering His ministers to transmit His examples to the others, and for this reason Paul has said: "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (1 Cor. iv. 16.) The principal intent of this good shepherd, says St. Bonaventure, is to fashion to the resemblance of Jesus Christ those whom heaven has placed under his guidance; but as men are more strongly impressed by what they see than by what they hear, the priests ought, by their holy lives, to place before their eyes a visible likeness of the Pastor of pastors, and say to them: *Si formam Christi desideratis ad imitandum agnoscere, in meis hanc moribus considerate.*

II. Strict obligation for the priest of imitating Jesus Christ, because of the functions which he performs. There is none of our functions but is performed in us and through us by Jesus Christ. In the pulpit I am His mouthpiece, he who hears me hears Him. He it is who exhorts *through me.* He it is who remits or retains sins in the holy tribunal. He baptizes at the sacred font: *Petrus baptizat, hic est qui baptizat; Paulus baptizet, hic est qui baptizat.* (St. Aug.) At the altar He immolates Himself through my ministry; to Him I lend my hands, my voice. *Ipse est qui sanctificat et immutat.* Does not this ineffable union, this sort of identity which my functions give me with Jesus Christ, require of me to enter fully into His views, to adopt His thoughts, His sentiments, so that between Him and me there may be but the same mind, the same heart, the same life?

O Jesus, all the lights Thou impartest to me confound me. Oh, that this confusion may become beneficial to me, and help me repair the injuries I have offered to Thy glory! When I establish a parallel between Thy life and mine, when I compare Thy contempt of all earthly things with my senseless efforts to obtain them, and Thy eagerness for worldly contempt with my passionate longing for the esteem of men, I ask myself, where is my Christianity, and in what respect canst thou recognize Thy image in me? What prince would not feel justified in punishing in his anger an ambassador who would represent him at a foreign court as I have represented Thee in the midst of Thy people?

May it not be said that I have ignored hitherto one of the first duties of the priest and of the Christian! Alas, it was thus as with many others of my duties. I gave them no thought. Give me grace, O my God, not only not to forget this obligation, but to accomplish it as faithfully as my weakness will permit, and since the admirable effect of the Sacrament of Thy love is to transform us in Thee, grant, I beseech, that, at Thy entrance into my soul, all my vices may disappear to be replaced by Thy virtues, that I henceforth may remember, without blushing, the sublime qualification of the priest. *Sa erdos ater Christus.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Obligation of imitating Jesus Christ indispensable to the Christian. According to St. Basil, the imitation of Christ is the proper definition of Christianity. They who listen to the words of other masters are considered their disciples; but Jesus declares we are His disciples only inasmuch as we imitate Him. "Learn of Me," not so much the knowledge that is expressed by words, as that which is rendered palpable by example. The life which I lead, such is the important knowledge that I impart.

Second Point.—Obligation of imitating Jesus Christ still more strict for the priests. On account of our titles and of our functions. I. We are ministers, ambassadors, vicars of Jesus Christ, and pastors of souls. Ministers: "If any one minister to Me let him follow Me." The ambassador of the Son of God should represent Him, show Him to the world. His vicar takes His place principally in the reproduction of His virtues. The pastor ought to be *forma gregis*. I can not say to others: *Imitatores mei estote*, except inasmuch as I can add: *Sicut et ego Christi*. II. Our functions require that we should imitate Jesus Christ. All those functions suppose that between Jesus Christ and us there is but one mind, one heart, one life.

MEDITATION X.

IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. ITS NECESSITY. (Continued.)

1.—*Without it We can not Save Ourselves.*
2.—*We can not Save Our Brethren.*

First Point.—Without imitating Jesus Christ we can not save ourselves. This consequence follows rigorously from the preceding meditation. Shall we save ourselves if we neither

fulfil the essential obligations of the priesthood, nor those of the Christian religion? We have seen that to imitate Jesus Christ is the first duty of the Christian and of the priest. As it is, however, most important that we be convinced of the obligation of walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, through motives of necessity, if not through higher motives, let us listen to the words of St. Paul, and strive to understand his doctrine: "Whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son." (Rom. viii. 29.) That is, according to the commentators: Those whom God has foreknown to be of the number of the elect, He has predestined to become conformable to His Son by the imitation of His virtues. According to the teachings of the same apostle, Jesus Christ is the First-Born, the head of the body of the elect. It follows that we shall not be admitted into the eternal kingdom save inasmuch as we shall be the brethren of Jesus Christ and the members of this adorable head; but will He acknowledge us for His brethren if our sentiments and manners do not give us, as it were, a family resemblance to Him? Shall we be His living members if not animated with His spirit, if we live not His life?

Let us add that predestination to glory is the effect of a particular kindness of God, by which He prefers us to others; but this particular kindness is itself due to the image of His Son, which He sees imprinted in us through fidelity to His grace. The only object of the Father's complacency is His Son. The same reason which makes Him love Himself infinitely, because of His infinite perfections, makes Him also love infinitely His divine Word, who is His consubstantial image. He does, as it were, exhaust His love in loving Him, so that He can love no one but Him, or in relation with Him. We are agreeable to Him only through Jesus Christ. (Ep. i.) In Him He has predestinated us to be His children by adoption. "He has predestinated us unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ." (Ib.) "He has blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ib.) When He sees in us a great resemblance to His Son, He loves us exceedingly, and lavishes His favors upon us; if this resemblance be slight, His love toward us is equally slight; if we bear no resemblance to His Son, we have no claim to His love; and if finally our life is opposed to that of His Son, He condemns and repudiates us.

Here then is the ground either of my apprehension or of my security; for I can not be saved without resembling Jesus Christ; I can not be lost if I resemble Him. Other motives may engender the hope of eternal felicity, but they are not entirely free from all

anxiety; but resemblance with Jesus Christ is at the same time the most efficacious cause, the most certain pledge, and the most infallible mark of my predestination.

Second Point.—To imitate Jesus Christ is indispensable for him who wishes to labor for the salvation of others. To restore man to the life of grace and prepare him for heaven by sanctifying him is the work of the Redeemer alone; priests are only His instruments. The spirit of life which works salvation is in Jesus as in its source. He alone has received from His Father the mission of enlightening peoples, of saving all the nations of the earth. "I have given Thee to be the light of the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be my salvation even to the farthest parts of the earth." (Is. xlix. 6.) Although He deigns to associate us with Himself in this noble work, He still remains the one Jesus, the one Saviour, but such we also become with Him in proportion to our participation in His spirit and life.

Why had the apostles, and other apostolic men in all ages, so much power to sanctify souls? How did they save so many souls to heaven? They were filled with the spirit of Jesus Christ. Their projects, their labors, their conversation, everything breathed the spirit of Jesus Christ; their looks, their words, their bearing, the faculties of their souls, their bodily senses were under the influence of the spirit of Jesus Christ; everything about them bore its sacred imprint. By hearing, or simply by seeing them, one felt that a sweet virtue came from their person as from that of the Saviour, which healed spiritual infirmities. "Virtue came from Him and healed all." One might say of them what we read in the legend of St. Catharine of Siena, who was a living representation of Jesus Christ crucified: *Nemo ad eam accessit, quin melior abierit.* The holiness of Jesus Christ should abide in me before I can communicate it to others. The more I resemble Him the better I will be able to fashion other souls unto this resemblance.

I must, therefore, in the two-fold interest of my salvation and of that of my neighbor, apply myself to imitate Jesus Christ. I wish to save myself and labor for the salvation of others; here is the means given by the Saviour Himself: "Come, follow Me." Consider your life. Sorrow for the past. New resolutions. "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go." (Matt. viii. 19.) "Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly." (1 Cor. xv. 49.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Imitation of Jesus Christ indispensably necessary for my salvation. Shall I save my soul if I accomplish not

the essential obligations of the priesthood and of the Christian religion. Jesus Christ is the First-Born and the head of the elect. Will He acknowledge us for His members and brethren if we are not animated with His spirit? Predestination to glory supposes predestination to the imitation of the Saviour. On this consideration I should ground my fear or my security.

Second Point.—Imitation of Jesus Christ indispensable to him who labors for the salvation of others. Jesus Christ is the one Saviour. We save others according to the measure of our participation in His spirit and life. The sanctity of Jesus Christ must abide in me before I can communicate it to others. The more I will resemble Him the better I will be able to fashion others unto His divine likeness.

MEDITATION XI.

THE IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. ITS ADVANTAGES.

1.—*It Dispels Our Uncertainties.*
2.—*Strengthens Our Weakness.*
3.—*Alleviates all Our Pains.*

First Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ dispels all our doubts and uncertainties. When we can not properly discern an object shrouded in darkness, we bring light to bear upon it so as properly to appreciate its worth; thus, in order to determine the value of a human act, it suffices to compare it with the examples of the Saviour. Is He not the true light which enlightens every man coming into this world? (Joan. i.) Is He not truth itself? (Joan. xiv.) "O Lord," says the Royal Prophet, "I know not where to put my foot that I may not fall into a snare; but Thy word, like a divine lamp, guides me by its infallible light"; "Thy word is a lamp to my feet." (Ps. cxviii. 105.) This lamp, says St. Bonaventure, is a light in an earthen vessel. The vessel is the sacred humanity of Jesus; the light shining therein is His divinity; our life is the road we have to travel over; our ignorance is the darkness which envelops it. We are so disposed to take appearances for realities, so prone to judge favorably of whatever flatters our passions! How shall we save ourselves from error? By following Jesus Christ who walks before us and enlightens us with the heavenly light of His virtues. We will not go astray when we have infinite Wisdom for a guide. "He who followeth Me walketh not in darkness." If I constantly lead the life of grace which is in Jesus Christ, and springs forth from His

examples, I will certainly come to the light of glory and of eternal life. "But he shall have the light of life." (Joan. viii. 12.)

As in order to convince my mind and bring it under the empire of faith, there is nothing so efficacious as the maxim: "The only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared" (Joan. i. 18), so, when there is a question of my direction and guidance, nothing should act so forcibly on my will as this saying of the same Son of God: "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." (Joan. xiii. 15.) Precious security! I am often in ignorance of the path I should follow, or feel uneasy and undecided. Is not this one of the ways which appears safe to man, and nevertheless leadeth unto death? (Ps. xvi.) Take confidence, O my soul, thou shalt never follow that insidious path; thou shalt, on the contrary, follow the very safest and surest way as long as thou wilt be faithful to walk in the footsteps of the Saviour God. My life shall be holy and perfect in exact proportion to its conformity with the life of the model of all holiness and perfection.

Second Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ strengthens our weakness. If, in order to avoid evil and do good, we have need of light, we have still more need of strength and energy. The imitation of Jesus Christ is an abundant source of strength, because of the examples which He sets before us and of the grace which accompanies it.

I. It suffices to witness the performance of some noble act in order to be encouraged to act likewise. A soldier does not lack courage when he fights side by side with a valiant captain.

Gideon, wishing to animate the ardor of his soldiers, simply gave them the example: "Do what you will see me do," he said; "I will enter the camp of the enemies, follow me." (Jud. vii. 17.) The Scripture adds that all his soldiers followed him. Simon Machabeus sees that his soldiers hesitate to cross a torrent which separates them from the enemy; he enters it first, and all pass over it after him. "He went over first, then the men seeing him passed over after him." (1 Mach. xvi. 6.) Is there a Christian, however so weak, who, considering how the Saviour lived in poverty, contempt, and sufferings, and gave up His very life for our souls, will not be animated with holy emulation, or at least will not condemn his own cowardice? Moreover, a most powerful assistance is found in the imitation of this exemplar.

II. Jesus Christ is a living and a life-giving model. Whilst He induces us to imitate Him by the beauty of His examples, He enables us so to do by His grace. He is a man, says St. Bernard, and as such I see Him clothed with my weakness, that I may witness

in Him the battles which I have either to sustain or to give; but He is also God almighty, with the power to assist and render me victorious in those combats. *Exemplum sumo ab homine, auxilium a potente.* Let us therefore walk courageously in the paths which He has traced for us, and let us not fear defeat. He is the support of those who follow Him. The nearer we shall be to the source of our strength, the stronger we shall be ourselves. *Quis potest laborare sequens Jesum, cum ipse dicat: Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis? Si semper sequimur, nunquam deficiemus; dat enim vires sequentibus se. Itaque quo proprior virtuti fueris, eo fortior eris.* (St. Amb. I. 3, Ep. 25.)

St. Wenceslaus went out barefooted on a very cold winter's night to visit the Blessed Sacrament in the different shrines of his capital. His companion began to complain of the excessive cold. "Put your feet in my footprints," said the pious monarch; "perhaps, by so doing, God will be pleased to help you." Hardly had the officer obeyed the king than a pleasant warmth, rising from the icy footprints of the monarch, began to pervade all his members, and he had no longer any need to complain of the cold. This is a touching image of what happens to generous and confident souls who continually follow the Saviour. This good Master deigned to drink to the very dregs the chalice of every suffering, and left therein for us but a few drops of bitterness. The thorns of the road caused His feet to bleed, but in our regard their sharpness has been blunted. By the very fact of striving to imitate Him I do the very thing which is most pleasing to Him; I oblige Him, so to say, to come to my assistance, and with His grace I am all powerful. Thus, by His example, He is the strength of the martyrs, the patience and sanctification of the saints.

Third Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ alleviates all our pains. We are never alone in tribulation, and we may say of the Son of God what He Himself says of His faithful follower: *Cum ipso sum in tribulatione.* He experienced all kinds of trials, in order to mitigate ours. He chose for Himself the most austere, the most abject and trying of all lives, so that during all our existence there might not occur a moment of pain or of sorrow of which He could not say, *Exemplum dedi vobis.* What you suffer I suffered before you. I suffered it more intensely than you; I suffered it for you. Are you poor? That is the condition I had chosen preferably to others. Is your honor attacked? Was there any regard for Mine? Remember My silence in the midst of calumnies and reproaches. See your God clothed with the white garment at the court of Herod; behold Him on the cross! Do your friends, does Heaven itself seem to forsake you? Have not

I endured all those agonies of the heart? Mingle your tears with Mine, they will not be so bitter. A burden shared by two loses much of its weight. The disciple is not more than his master. Would you be a delicate member under a head crowned with thorns? This reflection well considered subdues all sorrows and makes us find joy in sufferings.

The imitation of Jesus Christ is therefore the true "Godliness" mentioned by St. Paul: "Profitable to all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come." (1 Tim. iv. 8.) How is it that I have hitherto neglected a practice so essential, so sweet, so efficacious in enabling me to attain the most perfect holiness? Since Thou grantest me, O Lord, to re-enter this way, the only one way which safely leads to Thee, O my true life, I will, with the help of Thy grace, nevermore stray from it, but make rapid strides toward the God of perfection. I will follow my Saviour as closely as possible. Blessed shall I be if, at my death, my conscience will enable me to say, at least with regard to the few days that are left me: "My foot has followed His steps, I have kept His ways and have not declined from it." (Job. xxiii. 11.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ dispels all our doubts. In order to determine the value of a human act compare it with the examples of the Saviour. An action is more or less perfect in proportion to its greater or lesser conformity with the model of all perfection. One does not go astray when following infinite wisdom. I walk in the safest and most perfect of all ways when I walk in the steps of the Son of God.

Second Point.—The imitation of Christ strengthens all our weaknesses through the beauty of the exemplar, and the grace which goes with it. What soldier would fail in courage, if fighting side by side with a valiant captain? Jesus grants us this grace also. When I strive to imitate Him, I do the very thing most pleasing to Him in the world, and I force Him, as it were, to come to my assistance.

Third Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ alleviates all our pains. We are never alone when we suffer. The Saviour took upon Himself the most austere, the most trying of all human lives, so that there might not be in all our existence one moment of sorrow of which He could not say: "What you suffer, I suffered it before you; I suffered it more intensely than you do. Mingle your tears with Mine, they will cease to be so bitter. The load

shared by two loses much of its weight. Would you be a delicate member under a head covered with thorns?"

MEDITATION XII.

IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. ITS ADVANTAGES. (Continued.)

1.—*It Sanctifies all Our Actions and Perfects all Our Virtues.*
2.—*It Fulfils all the Intentions of God concerning Us.*

First Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ sanctifies all our actions and perfects all our virtues.

1. By actions we here understand the divers operations of the soul, both those which are produced exteriorly and those which remain within us, and are purely interior. What is the principal source of their sanctity and merit? That source is the end we have in view, and the motive by which we are actuated when we perform them. But can I propose to myself anything but what is good and perfect whenever I endeavor to become conformable to the infinitely perfect model of all that is good? If I unite my intentions to those of Jesus Christ, making them my own, as all His disciples should do, surely those intentions will be as perfect as it is possible for them to be.

What did He seek in all things, if not the glory, and the greatest glory, of God, through the sanctification and salvation of souls? Oh, what a treasure of merits I would soon amass did I but make it a practice to repeat with devotion in the detail of my actions that admirable formula which I recite at the beginning of the Holy Office: *Domine in unione illius divinae intentionis!* I associate myself, O Lord Jesus, with the intentions so pure and fervent which animated Thee, when offering to Thy Father the tribute of Thy praise, conversing with men, performing Thy manifold duties, in all Thy sufferings, even in Thy bodily cares.

Moreover, when I apply myself to imitate the Saviour, I act as a Christian; for in this precisely is the essence of the Christian life, which is nothing but the life of Jesus Christ in us. The spirit of Jesus Christ has had two bodies to vivify: the one which He took in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, and the one which He acquired by our redemption; His natural body, and the mystical body, the Church. That divine spirit has been in Our Saviour the principle of two lives: the one was ended on the cross; the other is continued in us. Not being able to continue to suffer and

merit in His own person, His will is to glorify His Father until the consummation of ages through the holy actions and sufferings of His members.

The life of the Christian is, therefore, nothing else in reality but an extension of the life of Jesus Christ. I continue His prayer when I pray, His laborious life when I labor, His suffering life when I suffer. It is therefore the Saviour Himself who thinks, speaks, acts, and suffers in me, when I am docile to the inspiration of His spirit. "Christ liveth in me." St. Gaetanus explains as follows this word of the great Apostle: *Actiones vitales meae, intelligere, cogitare, amare, delectari, tristari, cupere, operari, jam non sunt meae, jam non procedunt a me; sed sunt Christi in me, sed procedunt a Christo in me.* Jesus is in me, as His Father is in Him; He in some proportion operates in me as His divinity operated in His humanity. "My Father worketh until now, and I work."

What a price, what an excellence would this adorable principle impart to my actions, did I permit it freely to influence my intelligence, my memory, my will and my senses, and in one word to direct my life! Were the instrument yet more imperfect it would bring forth none but masterpieces, if it offered no resistance to the divine artist who uses it. Can any action performed by the hand of God be anything but infinitely perfect?

II. What is true of our actions is true also of our virtues. If they be modeled upon those of the Son of God, animated by His spirit, they shall be perfect. According to St. Gregory Nazianzen, sacerdotal sanctity should be like unto pure gold, which has passed several times through the crucible, and, being examined on all sides, tested in every point and detail, shows no defect, gives no suspicious sound, does not indicate the presence of any alloy. We shall reach this degree of perfection, elevated as it is, if we apply ourselves to imitate the Saviour, and become true images of Him.

Second Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ fulfils all the intentions of God concerning us. Sublime destiny of man! God wills that we should have with Him a three-fold resemblance: of *nature:* "God created man to His image" (Gen. i. 27); of *virtues:* "Be merciful. . . . Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48); of *glory and happiness:* "When He shall appear, we shall be like to Him" (1 Joan. iii. 2). God gives us the first and the last of these three resemblances: we must concur with His grace in order to form the second within us. *Si similis Deo fieri cupis, videndo eum sicuti est, da operam ut ei similis fias, videndo eum sicuti pro te factus est; ac ita per imitationem sacrae humanitatis ad similitudinem venies summae divinitatis.* (St. Bern.)

The Word Incarnate came to show us in His person how God acts and lives, that we may appropriate to ourselves this action and this life; whence it follows that in a true sense the imitation of Jesus Christ is the deification of man. If a man, says St. Clement of Alexandria, places himself under the direction of a laborer and asks to be taught by him, he will become a laborer after the manner of his teacher. Should he address himself to a soldier, a merchant, a philosopher, an actor, each of these masters will teach him to become what he himself is. If he becomes a disciple of the Saviour, he will become like unto the Saviour God, living and conversing with the sons of men. Such is the end of all the graces that we receive. All the operations of the Holy Ghost in our souls tend only to the formation of Jesus Christ therein. "Until Christ be formed in you."

What has been said applies to the simple Christian; but the Lord has still higher designs regarding His ministers. The priest, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, is a God, and his mission is to transform other men into gods: *Deum existentem, et Deos efficientem.* We deify our brethren by making them participate in the spirit and life of God, which is in Jesus Christ. If we ourselves possess this spirit and this life with greater abundance, we shall be better able to communicate them to others. On this account does the good Master so ardently desire to see us perfect imitators of Himself. He had given a general invitation to all His disciples, but to us He adds another special one, and makes it more pressing, through the touching motive of our brethren's salvation: "Come ye after Me, and I will make you to be fishers of men." (Matt. iv. 19.) Our success in this spiritual fishing will depend on our fidelity to follow Him. "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit." (Joan. xv. 5.) Now, that which unites us to the Saviour in the most intimate manner, that which makes His life and our own but one life, is our application to imitate Him.

Let us gather together, as in a bright cluster, the divers points we have considered concerning the imitation of Jesus Christ. This imitation is absolutely necessary for our salvation. As Christians we are rigorously bound to imitate Him, because this imitation contains all the spirit of the Christian religion; as priests our duty in this matter is rendered more strict; for all our titles, all our functions make it incumbent upon us to follow the Master. Unless we imitate Our Saviour we can not reach heaven, nor lead souls thereto; but if we do, we shall experience every facility in accomplishing this two-fold object. In this essential and salutary practice, we shall find truth for our intelligence, strength for our

will, consolation in our troubles; all our actions shall be sanctified, all our virtues raised to the highest perfection; and finally all the designs which our divine Saviour has concerning us shall be realized.

O Jesus, how great has been my illusion hitherto concerning this capital point! I acknowledge it to my shame; I did not attach to it the sovereign importance which it deserves. I pretended to teach Christianity, and I forgot that it consists entirely in the imitation of Thee. My intent was to save souls, and I hardly thought of teaching them to walk in the footsteps of Him who came to open the path to heaven. I declared myself a guide, and I myself followed not Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life." And yet, O my Lord, when Thou nourishest me every day with Thy Holy Eucharist, what else is Thy intention but to transform me into Thyself, to make Thyself visible in Thy representative, and to offer in my person, for the imitation of all, the patience, the meekness, all the virtues of which Thou art the all-perfect exemplar. How poorly have I seconded the designs of Thy ardent charity! The past is done with, however. Henceforth I will endeavor to reproduce Thy examples; and I will abandon myself entirely to Thy Holy Spirit, that He may transform me into Thee. Come, O my Saviour, live in me, in order to accomplish in me, and, through me, in my brethren, all the merciful designs of Thy love. *O Jesu, vivens in Maria, veni et vive in famulis tuis.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The imitation of Jesus Christ sanctifies all our actions and perfects all our virtues. My intentions shall be as perfect as it is possible for them to be, if I make those of Jesus Christ my own. He sought in all things the greatest glory of His Father. When I strive to imitate Jesus Christ I live His life, am animated by His spirit. How great were the excellence of all my actions, did I but permit Him freely to govern all my faculties, to direct my life! The same should be said of my virtues as well as of my actions. Let them be modeled upon those of Our Lord. Let His spirit animate them. What would then be wanting to their perfection!

Second Point.—It fulfils all the intentions of God concerning us. God wills that we should have with Him a triple resemblance of *nature*, of *holiness*, of *happiness*. He gives us the first and the third. Our co-operations with His graces obtains for us the second. The Word Incarnate came amongst us to make us acquainted in a visible manner with the life of God, in order that we may

imitate it. All the graces we receive, all the operations of the Holy Ghost within our souls, have no other object than to mould them to the likeness of Jesus Christ. Come, O my God, live Thou within me, in order to accomplish in my soul all the merciful designs of Thy loving heart.

MEDITATION XIII.

IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST DETACHMENT WHICH IT REQUIRES.

1.—*We must Renounce All to Follow Jesus Christ.*
2.—*In Renouncing All We Lose Nothing.*
3.—*In Renouncing Everything We Gain Everything.*

First Point.—We must renounce all to follow Jesus Christ. This condition is clearly laid down by the Saviour for every man who desires to become His disciple. "He said to all, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and carry his cross daily, and follow Me." (Luc. ix. 23.) "If any man come to Me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea and his own life also, he can not be My disciple." (Ib. xiv. 26.) " . . . Every one of you that doth not renounce all that he possesseth, can not be My disciple." (Ib. xiv. 33.) One must be free from all hindrance, from all burden, who desires to follow him who advances with giant strides. *Exultavit sicut gigas ad currendam viam, nec currentem sequi potes oneratus.* (St. Bern.) Every attachment is a chain and a weight, impeding and delaying us. Bear in mind, however, that detachment must be complete, and it is not such, except inasmuch as we renounce ourselves. *Non reliquit omnia qui retinuit seipsum; imo vero nihil prodest sine seipso cætera reliquisse.* (St. Pet. Dam.)

Such is the true idea of evangelical self-denial. To give to God all that I possess, without giving Him myself, would be in His eyes a sacrifice of little value; it is myself, my heart, that He requires. For this reason Jesus Christ has established self-denial as the foundation of all His moral code, and He requires that to the hatred of our father, mother, and all things, in the Scriptural sense, we should add the denial and hatred of ourselves. *Adhuc autem et animam suam.* One in fact continues to possess whatsoever he desires to retain, and which the heart ceases not to love.

When I consecrated myself to Thee, O my God, it seems to me that I gave up all that I possessed outside of myself; but did I surrender myself? If, perchance, I did so in those blessed moments

when Thy grace spoke so eloquently within my heart, did I not afterward take back a part of my offering? Have I been entirely free from all influence of self-love and attachments to my own will? On the great day of judgment, when Thou wilt render to every man according to his works, shall I dare to present myself before Thee, in the company of those holy priests who will say: "Behold we have left all things and followed Thee." (Matt. xix. 22.) Yet the practice of this self-denial ought to be easy, if I consider what I have either to lose or to gain by leaving all things to follow Thee.

Second Point.—In renouncing all we lose nothing. What are all the things of earth that I may possess, if I judge of them in the light of the declarations of the Spirit of Truth speaking to us in the Scriptures? They are deception, vanities, nothingness itself. And why? Because my heart will ever consider as nothing whatever does not satisfy its desires, but, on the contrary, excites and increases them, without satisfying their longing. If the whole world were my portion I would still ask, Is this all? As I continually dwell on what I still need, I forget what I already possess, and consider it of very little value. What, after all, are the things which I can give up for God—riches, relatives, honors, pleasures, if I prize them at their real value? I question the dying man, and he tells me that all that passeth away is nothing. I hear St. Paul, and learn his doctrine. "This therefore, I say, brethren, the time is short, it remaineth that they also who have riches be as if they had none. And those that buy, as though they possessed not; and they who use this world as if they used it not." And remark the reason he puts forth to encourage us in the acquisition of this detachment: "For the fashion of this world passeth away." (1 Cor. vii. 29, *et seq.*) It amounts to saying: What are all the pleasures of the world? What is the world itself? A shadow, a mere nothing. Yet if this shadow were permanent! But no! It is a shadow which passes away, a mere nothing which vanishes out of sight and existence.

It is therefore evident that by renouncing all things I lose nothing. But, again, how munificent Thou art, O my God, in compensating for what I seem to lose by this renouncement! Behold the blessed challenge Thou didst address to Thy apostles, and dost still address to whomsoever will possess Thee, and Thee alone. "When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want anything? But they said: nothing." (Luc. xxii. 35.) If you have wanted nothing, what did you lose by depriving yourself of all in order to belong to God wholly and entirely? Let us advance yet another step.

Third Point.—In renouncing everything to follow Jesus Christ we gain everything. Peter had questioned his Master in the name of the apostles and of their followers in the way of evangelical renouncement: "Behold we have left all things, and have followed Thee: what therefore shall we have?" (Matt. xix. 27.) Let us, O my soul, delight in considering the sweet answer of Our Saviour: "Amen, I say to you, that you who have followed Me, . . . you also shall sit on twelve seats judging, . . . and every one that hath left house, or brethren, or sister, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." One hundred-fold in this life, and life everlasting in the next! Is there beyond this anything more to be desired? By stripping myself of everything, I gain everything, yea even for this life. He has no anxiety who possesses nothing, and desires nothing. Our desires are our tyrants; we stifle them by withdrawing the fuel they feed upon.

Let us study the principle. As soon as I renounce all, through choice, voluntarily, I acquire freedom of mind; I cease to be troubled by a thousand cares and anxieties. I acquire a freedom of heart; I am no longer tormented by turbulent desires, nor overcome with sorrow, nor consumed by remorse. In this blessed state the mind and heart enjoy perfect peace; and to enjoy peace is to enjoy the sovereign good. Is not this over one hundred-fold more than what I abandoned to follow my divine King? To this, O my Lord, Thou addest the promise of life everlasting; for Thou wilt be Thyself the reward of my sacrifice.

I therefore gain everything in renouncing everything, for the sake of loving and possessing Thee alone! How true then it is, that I have chosen the better part! Thou keepest Thy promises; I must also keep mine. O Bread of angels, enable me to despise more and more the things of earth! Come, teach me to hate myself, come and unite me with my Saviour and God in the bonds of a strong, ardent, ever-growing charity. *Transfige, dulcissime Domine Jesu, medullas et viscera animae meae suavissimo ac saluberrimo amoris tui vulnere. . . . Da ut anima mea te esuriat, panem angelorum . . . te semper sitiat fontem vitae, fontem sapientiae et scientiae, fortem aeterni luminis, torrentem voluptatis, ubertatem domus Dei.* (St. Bon.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—We must renounce all to follow Jesus Christ. The condition is indispensable. He who does not renounce everything that he possesses can not be the Saviour's disciple. Every

attachment is a chain. One must be free in order to follow a guide who strides along with giant pace. It suffices not, says Our Lord, to leave father and mother and all things; we must renounce ourselves as well. It is my being, my heart, that He will have. The practice of this detachment ought to be easy when I consider what I have to gain or to lose in leaving all for God.

Second Point.—We lose nothing when we renounce everything to follow Jesus Christ. What are all the things which I can possess here below? Deception, vanity, nothingness itself. If I listen to the voice of the dying man, he teaches me that all that passeth away is nothing.

Paul declares that the "fashion of the world passeth away." It is a mere shadow, and passeth away like a shadow. It is therefore evident that by separating from everything I leave nothing.

Third Point.—In renouncing everything to follow Jesus Christ, we gain everything. Peter questions the Son of God concerning the reward reserved to them who abandoned everything to follow Him. O my soul, consider with attention and delight the sweet answer of the Master: "Amen I say to you, that you who have followed Me . . . shall sit upon twelve thrones judging, . . . and whoever shall leave house, or brothers, or sisters, . . . for My name's sake, shall receive one hundred-fold, and shall possess life everlasting." (Ib.) One hundred-fold in this life, and life everlasting in the next! Is there beyond this anything to be desired?

MEDITATION XIV.

PRACTICE OF THE IMITATION OF JESUS CHRIST. MEANS TO ARRIVE AT IT.

1.—*A Deep Knowledge of this Admirable Model.*
2.—*Love of the Saviour resulting from this Knowledge.*
3.—*Frequent Comparison of the Copy with the Model.*

First Point.—Knowledge of Him, first step toward the imitation of Jesus Christ. St. Paul strongly exhorts the Christians to "consider," to study the "Apostle and High Priest of our faith," the Word Incarnate, given to men not merely to be their ransom, but to be as the living book, wherein they are instructed concerning their heavenly vocation. "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly vocation, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus." (Heb. iii. 1.) Let us pity those who have not yet "learned to know Jesus." They carry over their eyes a bandage that conceals from them the beauty of His ex-

amples, and hinders them from imitating Him. As for us who are blessed with the knowledge of Him, we behold in Him the glory of the Lord, that is revealed to us in His perfect life. We are transformed into this image; we pass from one glory to another, from one virtue to another, according to the inspirations of the Holy Spirit who animates us. "We all, beholding the glory of the Lord with open face, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." (2 Cor. iii. 18.)

Jesus Christ is that divine type prefigured by that which was shown to Moses on the mountain of Sinai; after this model the true tabernacle of God, the Christian soul, must be fashioned. "Look and do according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mountain." (Ex. xxv. 40.) It suffices not to look at it superficially, it has to be considered with attention, studied with care; "consider," in order to acquire a precise knowledge of it, to seize all its traits, and thus be enabled to reproduce them.

Such is in reality the science of the Christian, the one in which St. Paul gloried, and which he asked of God for his disciples. He called it the science of the charity of Jesus Christ, which "surpasseth all knowledge." (Eph. iii. 19.) This is also the only science that St. Augustine desired, and which he sought in his books. *Quaerens Jesum in libris.*

Oh, the truly worthy object of our studies! What do we know if we know not Jesus Christ? He is the "beginning" and the "end," the "Alpha" and the "Omega." (Ap. xxi. 6.) "All is in Him, from Him, by Him." (Rom. xi. 36.) Yet how little is He known, even by those very ones who are honored with the mission of making Him known to the world! How many priests there are, who, though thought to be fervent, really deserve the reproach addressed by our Lord to His apostles on the eve of His Passion: "So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me?" (Joan xiv. 9.) "A long time I have been with you, in the most intimate and multiplied relations; My cross is in your hands, My Gospel upon your lips; I Myself am under your eyes, you touch Me, you dispose of Me at will, My flesh is your daily food, My blood your daily drink, . . . and with that all, I am as a stranger to you. Oh, if you knew Me, how different would your heart be from what it is!"

Let us spare Jesus Christ this complaint, and ourselves this great shame, by assiduously reading His Gospel, and the beautiful commentaries which are given us by St. Paul in his epistles. Let us through the practice of meditation penetrate His doctrine and His mysteries. *Summum igitur studium nostrum sit in vita Jesu meditari.* (Im., i. 1.) St. Bonaventure gives the same coun-

sel: *Haec sit sapientia tua et meditatio tua, semper aliquid de ipso cogitare.* St. Francis Xavier was wont every month, in his meditations, to consider the abridged life of the Saviour, such as it is in the books of the spiritual exercises by St. Ignatius. This is an excellent means to obtain a clear, distinct idea of His person, of His sentiments, of His actions; of engraving within ourselves such an image of Him as will render Him, as it were, ever present to us. The better we will know Him the more we shall love Him.

Second Point.—Love of Jesus Christ, second means of arriving at His imitation. It is impossible to be enlightened concerning the ineffable charms of the Word Incarnate without adhering to Him through love; and it is impossible to love Him without endeavoring to resemble Him, for love does essentially imitate. Everything pleases in those whom we love: we adopt their tastes, their thoughts, their manners, sometimes unconsciously we grow to the resemblance of a friend to such a degree as to make him another self: *Amicus alter ego.*

Three different kinds of love toward Jesus Christ excite us to imitate Him through different motives: the love of esteem, the love of affection or tenderness, and the love of self-interest. It is our own good we seek in loving the Saviour. The preceding meditations have taught us how much advantage there is in imitating Him. If our love of Him comes from the high esteem we have of His infinite excellence, we are induced through a natural desire for glory to draw near unto Him who possesses all perfections and is greatness itself. "It is great glory to follow the Lord." (Ecclus. xxviii. 38.) Finally, the love of tenderness inclines us to unite ourselves to the persons who are its object; hence there can be no veritable union without a community of manners, of thoughts and sentiments. Moreover, one who loves tenderly wants to prove his affection, and the most incontestable proof of affection consists in imitation. I can question the affection of others toward me as long as it is expressed only by words or by some trifling manifestation of esteem; but if in order to please me they renounce their dearest inclinations, deprive themselves, as it were, of their own life in order to conform to mine, then I can no longer question the sincerity of their sentiments.

Third Point.—Frequent comparison of our life with that of the Saviour, third means of arriving at His imitation. When an artist intends to copy a painting, he looks attentively from the model to the copy in order to curtail and modify as conformity may require. Let us act in the same manner. De we desire to imitate Jesus Christ? Let us cast upon Him the eyes of our soul, and then turn them back upon ourselves. Let us transfer into

our life the virtues which we admire in His; let us destroy in us all that is opposed to the adorable model. This practice ought to be familiar to whomsoever wishes to merit the beautiful name of representative of the Son of God.

How do I stand with regard to this imitation so excellent and indispensable? According to this imitation, I shall be judged; I must judge myself from this standpoint now, this very day. Cardinal de Berulle used to say that in order to form an idea of the Son of God conversing amongst men all he had to do was to behold St. Francis de Sales, whose exterior bore such an impress of holiness that the beholder thought he saw Jesus Christ when seeing him. Have I reached this state of perfection? Could it be said that my modesty recalls the modesty of the Saviour, that His life is made manifest in my body? (1 Cor. iv. 40.) But it is His interior that I should particularly imitate. What were His sentiments concerning humiliation, sufferings, poverty, and what are mine? What did He think of riches, of pleasures, of honors? What do I think of them? Could His profound religion, His zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls, be noticed in me? Alas, O Lord, I resemble Thee as the night resembles the day! This is indeed a humiliating confession. Instead, however, of being discouraged by it, I will use it as an incentive to greater devotion. I will now make greater strides in this path, out of which there is no salvation, seeing that I made so little progress heretofore. I will therefore often ask myself the question: *Quid nunc Christus?* What would Our Lord do now, what would He think, what would He say if He were in my place? What did He think, what did He say, what did He do when He was similarly situated?

Thou commandest me, O my Lord, to imprint Thy sacred self as a divine seal upon my heart and upon my life. Thou desirest that my works and thoughts, and everything in me, bear the impress of Thine image, for nothing can ente heaven, nor give any claim to its possession, save what is marked with this sacred character: "Put me as a seal upon Thy heart, as a seal upon Thy arm." (Cant. viii. 6.) Thou declarest also that "love is strong as death." (Ib.) O Jesus, to know Thee is to love Thee, and it is principally in the participation of Thy heavenly Bread that Thou openest the eyes of Thy disciples. "They knew Him in the breaking of bread." (Luc. xxiv. 35.) Come, then, reveal Thyself to my heart, bring all the power of Thy charms to act upon it. *Adhaeream tibi inseparabiliter, adorem te infatigabiliter, serviam tibi perseveranter, quaeram te fideliter, inveniam te feliciter, possideam te aeternaliter.* (St. Ans., Med., 1.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—To know Jesus Christ. First steps toward His imitation. Jesus is the adorable type which was shown to Moses upon the Mountain of Sinai. On this divine model should be constructed the true tabernacle of God, the soul of the Christian and of the priest. What do we know if we know not Jesus Christ? Yet how little is He known, even by the very persons who are honored with the mission of making Him known to the world! "So long a time have I been with you, and have you not known Me?" Ah, who will give me the science of the charity of Jesus Christ, which surpasses all knowledge?

Second Point.—To love Jesus Christ, second means. Love essentially leads to imitation. *Amicus alter ego.* Love unites; there is no perfect union without community of sentiments. When one renounces his own inclinations and life, in order to adopt the life and inclinations of another, he gives the greatest possible mark of affection.

Third Point.—Often compare your life with that of the Saviour, third means. Do as the artist does who intends to copy a painting. He looks at the model, corrects, curtails, modifies. How do I stand with regard to this imitation so excellent and necessary? I shall be judged by it. I should judge myself by it. I will frequently ask myself the question, What would the Lord do were He situated as I am? What did He do, what did He say in similar circumstances?

SECTION THIRD.

SPECIAL VIRTUES PRACTISED BY THE SAVIOUR IN THE MYSTERIES OF HIS INCARNATION, OF HIS NATIVITY, OF HIS INFANCY, AND DURING THE THIRTY YEARS OF HIS HIDDEN LIFE.

MEDITATION XV.

THE INCARNATION OF THE WORD OF GOD. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons.*
2.—*Listen to the Words.*
3.—*Consider the Actions.*

First Prelude.—Recall briefly to mind the history of this mystery. The Most Holy Trinity, seeing all men on the road to

eternal ruin, takes compassion on their misfortune, and decrees the redemption of the human race. The fulness of time has come; God sends the archangel Gabriel to Mary to announce to her that she is about to become the Mother of His Son, by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

Second Prelude.—Picture to yourself on one side the vast extent of the universe, inhabited by so many different peoples, who all have so much need of a Saviour; on the other side, in an obscure province, the small city of Nazareth, the humble dwelling of Mary.

Third Prelude.—Ask for an intimate knowledge of the mysteries of God incarnate, who is to be thy liberator and guide, the grace to love Him ardently, that you may courageously endeavor to imitate Him.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons.

I. Who are all the men who inhabit the world at the moment the incarnation is about to take place? What diversity in their habits, in their language, in their condition! Some are at peace, others at war. Some mourn and lament. Why? Others are given to inordinate rejoicing. On what account? Ah, what senselessness may be often discovered in those lamentations, and nearly always in those rejoicings! Some are rich, others are poor. Here we find free men, there slaves. Many we behold on the threshold of life, many others departing from it. Alas, nearly all those creatures formed to the image of God, destined to partake of His felicity, nearly all agree upon one point only: they forget their heavenly origin and sublime destiny, they lose their immortal souls.

II. Behold the most adorable Trinity pitifully contemplating this spectacle; seeing those men alike guilty and miserable, swept away each moment by death, and falling into the abyss of hell. The eye of the Almighty hath discerned you amongst that multitude of wayward people. Ah, what an abundant share you shall have in the work of mercy which is being prepared!

III. Cast your eyes upon that Virgin ever blessed, the only pure one, the only immaculate one, amid the universal degradation. How modest, how recollected! Happy preparation for the reception of divine favors! Behold the angel saluting her with great respect! Are your dispositions of soul and body like unto those of Gabriel, when you draw nigh unto God? He certainly deserves infinitely more respect than the holiest of all creatures. When meditating on those various persons, surrender your heart to the affections which will naturally rise from their contemplation. O touching goodness of God! O the depth of human misery!

O the power of purity! O humility of the angel, outdone by the humility of Mary!

Second Point.—Listen to the words!

I. On earth I hear on every side useless, obscene, impious words. Profanity, imprecations, blasphemies, loud sacrilegious songs in honor of the demon. Thy blessed name, O my God, I hear not, or if it is pronounced, it is in profanation of it; and of Thy name, O Jesus, men know neither the power nor the sweetness.

II. In heaven my ears are gladdened by words of reconciliation and peace: Let us redeem men whom we have created. My Father, behold I come! The holocausts offered Thee hitherto could not be pleasing to Thee. I will take to Myself a body, and offer Myself to Thee. I come to accomplish Thy holy will. "Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldst not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me. . . . Then said I: Behold I come to do Thy will, O God!" (Heb. x. 5, 7.)

III. In the house of Nazareth: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." Gabriel continues to speak to the timid Virgin, and comforts her, saying that she has found grace before God. What greater consolation can be imagined? What have we to fear when we are beloved by the Almighty! He makes known to her the greatness of Him whose Mother she is to be. "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of God." Mary humbles herself still more. She questions the angel in regard to the security of her virginity. Then behold her humble acquiescence to the will of the Lord: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to thy word." Not a word related in this history but can impart to us some spiritual blessing.

Third Point.—Consider the actions.

I. On earth what do men do? What futility or wickedness in their occupation! What an abominable worship they offer to their idols. What sinfulness in their amusements, in their festivities. What detestable intrigues in order to supplant and destroy one another. With what madness they give themselves up to their passions, defiling within themselves the image of their God, running headlong into the eternal abyss. "Hell hath enlarged her soul, and opened her mouth without any bounds." (Is. v. 14.)

II. What touching emulation of charity toward us between the three adorable Persons of the Holy Trinity! God the Father gives us His Son; the Word gives Himself, and annihilates Himself by uniting Himself to the nature of men; the Holy Ghost operates this union of mercy and love.

III. At Nazareth the angel accomplishes religiously the mission confided to him; far from envying the glory of Mary, and the happiness of humanity, he rejoices for the one and the other. The mind of the august Virgin is entirely taken up with the contemplation of the mysteries accomplished in her, and she returns thanks to the Lord.

What examples offered for my imitation! When the world was plunged in the darkness of every error, in the filth of every crime, God sends His only-begotten Son, to bring man back to truth and virtue, to save him. "God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son." (Joan. iii. 16.) Shall I never have but empty words, barren sentiments, to offer Him in return for such boundless charity? The Son consents to clothe Himself with our nature, to hide all His perfections, to appear under the guise of a slave. "Being in the form of God . . . emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant." (Phil. ii. 6, 7.) What humility! What devotion to our interests! Mary, troubled at the voice of the angel, accepts the honor of maternity only after hearing that her virginity shall be preserved. What purity! What sublime faith! What obedience to the will of God! *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum!*

Colloquy with the three divine Persons. As a preparation for Mass you must say:

I. To the Word Incarnate: *Ave, dulcis Jesu, qui propter me dignatus es e regalibus sedibus e mellifluo corde Patris in hanc miseriarum vallem descendere, atque in Virginis Mariae castissimo utero de Spiritu sancto concipi, incarnari, homoque fieri. Elige, quaeso, cor meum in quo habites, hoc exorna, hoc bonis spiritualibus reple, hoc totum posside. Utinam ego te in illud humilitate profunda invitem, ardentique caritate recipiam, et receptum teneam! Utinam validis amoris vinculis tibi astringar, ut nunquam recedere, nunquam mente averti a te valeam!* (Lud. Blos.)

II. To the Blessed Virgin Mary: *Ave, Maria, per quam nos purissimam Christi carnem participamus, ad tremendam admodum mensam accedere audentes. Ave, Maria, per quam nos verum et immortalem panem gustamus.* (St. J. Dam.) *Ave, gratia plena quae sola inter mulieres benedicta, ad dominicae Incarnationis mysterium electa, et a Spiritu sancto praeparata, unigenitum Dei Filium castissimis visceribus tuis concepisti, ac mundo peperisti salvatorem. O Virgo purissima, intercede pro me sordido peccatore, et impetra mihi a Deo scelerum meorum veniam fidem vivam, spem firmam, caritatem perfectam, ut, Dominum meum Jesum, Filium tuum magnum, in hoc sacrificio decenter offeram, corde puro suscipiam, et exoptatum inde hauriam fructum. Amen.* (Scut. fid.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. The men who people the earth—what diversity in their manners, language, condition! The greater number, by far, forget their last end, and perish miserably. The Holy Trinity beholding this spectacle with compassion. What are the thoughts of God concerning me? The holy Virgin all pure amidst the general degradation. Admire her recollection, her hidden life in God. Behold the angel saluting her. Draw some fruit from each of the preceding considerations.

Second Point.—Listen to the words. What do you hear on earth? In heaven words of peace. In the house of Nazareth, words of the angel; Mary's questioning concerning the treasure of her virginity; and then her humble acquiescence to the divine will. "Be it done unto me according to thy word."

Third Point.—Consider the action . On earth what do men do? Futility, sinfulness of their occupations. In heaven: God the Father gives His Son; the Son of God gives Himself; the Holy Ghost accomplishes the union of the Divinity with humanity. The whole Trinity works for our salvation. At Nazareth the angel fulfils his mission. Mary co-operates with the design of God. Colloquy with the three divine Persons. With Mary.

MEDITATION XVI.

JESUS CHRIST PERFECT MODEL OF HUMILITY.

1.—*In His Incarnation.*
2.—*Through the Course of His Whole Life.*

Remark.—St. Bernard distinguishes between the *truth* and the *virtue* of humility. The former shows us our nothingness and profound abjection; and the latter enables us to love this abjection itself, and makes us cheerfully consent to be nothing, so that God may be all. The *truth* confounds and terrifies us; the *virtue* elevates and encourages us The one enlightens, and the other inflames. *Est humilitas quam nobis parit veritas et non habet calorem; et est humilitas quam caritas format et inflammat.* The knowledge of ourselves is nothing more than a preparation for true humility, or at most a preparation for the humility of the mind; it is not a Christian virtue; philosophy has reached thus far, but the humility which is the result of faith, the one which Jesus Christ teaches, and which St. Gregory calls *magistra omnium, materque virtutum*—this humility, we say, has its seat in the heart,

and regulates its affections. "Learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart." It leads us sincerely to despise ourselves as being really worthy of naught but contempt, and to love our abjection as bringing into clear relief the greatness of God. This is its first degree. The second consists in this: in desiring that all men should entertain the same sentiments concerning us, and should judge us as we judge ourselves. In the third degree, which is the most perfect, we are pleased when men act toward us conformably to the low opinion of ourselves with which we have inspired them. He who has attained this third degree is not content to suffer reproaches patiently; he accepts them joyfully and seeks for them with the ambition of worldlings for distinctions and honors. We will not say that humiliations are agreeable in themselves; but they render us like unto the Son of God humbled for our sake, and at the same time offer us a means of expressing to Him our love as well as of deserving his own.

First Point.—Jesus perfect model of humility in His incarnation. In this mystery His will and heart determined everything. "My heart has expected reproach." In order to appreciate this miracle of humility, we may distinguish five degrees, through which, since His entrance in the world, the Son of God descended to the lowest depth of abasement. *Homo factus est. . . Formam servi accipiens. . . Verbum caro factum est. . . In similitudinem carnis peccati. . . Exinanivit semetipsum. . .* Who shall sound those abysses? God made man! *Deum de Deo, lumen de lumine, Deum verum de Deo vero. . . Consubstantialem Patri; per quem omnia facta sunt.* What becomes of this God so great, the principle of all greatness? He was made man. *Homo factus est.* He is not God become *angel;* this would already be infinite humiliation. He goes down to the nature of man. O priest, bend your knees, incline your mind as well as your body, to submit it to the belief of this mystery. Who will measure the distance from God to man; from Him who said, "I am who I am," to him who should say in truth, "My substance is as nothing before Thee." (Ps. xxxviii. 6.)

A man, however, may remain a man on a throne as well as in the lower ranks of society. Did the Son of God choose for His condition one of those to which there is annexed wealth or authority? No, He chose the most abject, the most servile, the poorest of all conditions, "taking the form of a slave."

The Word made flesh. I feel more and more confounded. With St. John I rise as high as the very throne of the Deity. "In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. All things were made by Him." What a

majesty! What power! What glory! But it all soon vanishes away. Behold this Word of God, by whom all things were made, is Himself made man. "The Word was made flesh." At least, if He had taken only a human soul, the image of God, spiritual like God, immortal like God! But He takes also unto Himself our flesh. He contracts with it a union so intimate that in order to express it they must say: "The Word was made flesh." This flesh He will not have to be impassible, invulnerable, as it was when He came out of the grave; He will not appear in the world as Adam did, clothed with the strength and beauty of man's estate. He takes it as we see it in common infants, weak, delicate, subject to infirmities, liable to die.

Were those humiliations not sufficient? No. "In the likeness of sinful flesh." (Rom. viii. 3.) Next to sin itself there is nothing so abject as the likeness of sin. This likeness the Son of God assumes, being incapable of uniting Himself to sin. In His circumcision and baptism, but especially during His Passion, He appears less the sinner than sin itself. "Him, who knew no sin, for us He hath made sin." (2 Cor. v. 21.) He can descend no lower, and to give an idea of His abasement we must employ the words of St. Paul: "He emptied Himself."

Can we in truth believe that He was God? He who was hidden in the womb of a Mother, who appeared upon earth as a feeble child. He who suffered and died, was needy and destitute, who excited the compassion of all, and seemed but a common criminal, was He really God? Is He not God annihilated? "He emptied Himself." Behold the first appearance of my divine Master in the war which He wages against pride. His subsequent life will be in keeping with the beginning.

Second Point.—Jesus model of perfect humility through the whole course of His life. Every mystery of which He was the author, every circumstance of His life, one and all, chosen by Himself, testify to His love for abjection. He was born in a stable, a manger was His cradle. He submits to the rite of circumcision, He takes upon Himself the mark of the sinner. He, almighty as He was, flies into Egypt from the wrath of a weak and imbecile tyrant. Nearly all His life is spent in the shop of an artisan amidst the arduous labors of a common mechanic. He eats His bread in the sweat of His brow. His desire for humiliations is never absent. When one of His followers thought to flatter Him, by calling Him "Good Master," He quietly answers, "God alone is good." (Matt. xix. 17.) He performs miracles and forbids the witnesses to divulge the fact. They wish to make Him king, and He conceals Himself from them. When He is transfigured

on Mount Thabor, He commands the witnesses of His glory to remain silent concerning it until after His Resurrection. His thirst for humiliations, a thirst which was ever increasing, knew no bounds during His Passion. He then literally became as He was foreshown by the prophets—"The man of sorrows, the man struck by the hand of God, the last of men, a worm and not a man." He hungered after reproaches. "He shall be filled with them." (Lam. iii. 30.)

I have promised the Saviour to follow whithersoever He would go. "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou shalt go." I now know whither He goes. He strides on like a giant in the path of humiliations. Not only does He not desire the esteem of men, but He seeks to be despised by them. And now, my soul, what wilt thou do? Canst thou hesitate a single moment? Art thou fearful of going astray by regulating thy sentiments according to the principles of incarnate wisdom. Since thou admirest this God so profoundly humbled, thou shouldst find lovable whatsoever He hath loved. Look upon humiliations with His eyes, consider them by the light of His infallible truth. Go to the altar, go and learn within His heart how deserving they are of this love. *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari. Intolerabilis impudentia est, ubi sese exinanivit Majestas, vermiculus infletur et intumescat.* (St. Bern. de Nativ.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus perfect model of humility in His incarnation. To what lowliness does He now descend? He becomes man, not an angel. Who will compute the distance from God to man? He takes the form of a slave. Such will He be in His humanity. He was made flesh. He is not content with taking our nature. "The word was made flesh." He takes it with all its infirmities. He takes the resemblance of sin. "He emptied Himself."

Second Point.—Jesus model of perfect humility through the whole course of His life. Every circumstance of His life is an evidence of His love of abjection. His birth, circumcision, flight into Egypt, thirty years in the workshop of Nazareth. His desire of humiliations is noticeable both in His public and His hidden life. During His Passion, that craving after humiliations knows no bounds. O my soul, since thou adorest Jesus Christ annihilated, thou shouldst find lovable whatsoever He hath loved.

MEDITATION XVII.

HUMILITY. ITS EXCELLENCE.

1.—*In Itself.*
2.—*In its Effects.*

First Point.—There is nothing more excellent than humility considered in itself. It is truth, justice, and, in a manner, the whole of the Christian's religion.

I. We can not consider too deeply the words of St. Teresa, "Humility is truth"; not speculative truth, but truth passing from the intellect, which it enlightens, into the heart, directing and sanctifying its affections. With the light of this lamp, man discovers the infinitude of God, the nothingness of creatures and of itself; and, according to this knowledge, it regulates its esteem and its contempt, its hatred and its love.

The angel sinned through pride, because "he stood not in truth" (Joan. viii. 44), and he fell under the empire of falsehood. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own, for he is a liar." (Ib.) Let truth reign in you, says St. Bernard; let it govern your thoughts, and show you things such as they are; and vanity will disappear. *Non est quo intret vanitas ubi regnat veritas.* Unfortunately we fly from the truth, precisely because it humbles us, although humiliation is the way of salvation.

Precious humiliations, which I fear, whilst I should long for them! How good Thou art, O Lord, when Thou sendest them in greater abundance than I dare to ask. "It is good for me that Thou hast humbled me." He well understands his own interest who makes choice of this path. "The way of truth I choose." (Ps. cviii.) "I have chosen to be an abject." (Ps. lxxxiii. 11.) A good priest was wont to say, "As long as I shall be overwhelmed with miseries, I will not cease to cry out: Blessed miseries, the thought of which covers me with confusion in the presence of God, and shame before men. If you are necessary to me, I would not exchange you for the merits and the virtues of others; I would rather be thus, if thus I must be in order to be humble. I renounce all the graces that would deprive me of this advantage, and, in order not to love it, I consent to be deprived of all others." (P. de la Colombière.)

II. Humility is justice. The humble man renders to every man whatsoever is his due. "Honor to whom honor is due." (Rom. xiii. 7.) He has understood the injunction: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory

in his strength . . . but let him that glories glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me." (Jer. ix. 32, 24.) When his efforts prove successful, when he does some good, he returns all glory to Him who giveth both the power and the will. As far as he himself is concerned, he has done only what he was bound to do. Is he certain that he did it well? "We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were bound to do." "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory." He knoweth, moreover, what he deserves for so many faults that he has committed, and which he still commits every day. He knows of what crimes he would become guilty if the hand of God did not sustain him. Such is the source of the humble opinion he has of himself, whatever may be the esteem of man for him; he is the priest, who by his justice has become dear to the heart of God. "Behold the priest . . . who in his days pleased the Lord, and was found just."

III. Humility is in a manner the whole religion of the Christian. *Si quaeris quid sit primum in religione et disciplina Christi, respondeo: Primum est humilitas; quid secundum? humilitas; quid tertium? humilitas.* (St. Aug. Ep. lvi.) *Tota et vera christianae sapientiae disciplina in vera ac voluntaria humilitate consistit.* (Id. Ser. viii. de Epip.) The other virtues seem to be nothing but different forms of humility. Prayer is the self-abasement of man, who acknowledges his profound misery, and the infinite greatness of Him whom he adores and prays to, expecting all from God, nothing from himself. Faith is the humility of human reason, renouncing its own thoughts, accepting with submission the thoughts of God, and the authority of His Church; obedience is the humility of the will subjecting itself to another will; chastity is the humility of the flesh, which becomes subject to the spirit; exterior mortification is the humility of the senses; penance is the humility of all the passions which it immolates.

Second Point.—Nothing more excellent than humility considered in its effects. Grace, peace, glory in time and in eternity.

I. Grace. Your sins have raised a cloud between you and the Lord. Do you desire your prayer to reach the ear and the heart of God notwithstanding that darksome cloud? Do you desire your request to be granted? Do but this ,humble yourself. "The prayer of him who humbles himself, shall penetrate the clouds . . . and he will not depart till the most High behold." (Eccl. xxxv. 21.) "He hath had regard to the prayer of the humble." (Ps. ci. 18.) "The prayer of the humble and of the meek has always pleased Thee." (Judith, ix. 16.) As the loadstone attracts the steel, so humility draws down grace. *Velut magnes attrahit ferrum,*

sic humilitas gratiam ad se trahit. (St. Bern.) If grace is a source of living water, springing up unto life everlasting, humility is the vessel to be used in the drawing of it; and as the vessel is filled only by letting it down into the spring, so my soul will remain void of God unless I bring it down to the level of my own nothingness. *Sicut de fonte terreno non potest quis bibere, nisi voluerit se inclinare, ita de vivo fonte Christi, Spiritus sancti fluvio, nemo aquam vivam haurire poterit, nisi humiliter se inclinare voluerit.* (Cæs. Arel. Homil. xxxiv.)

II. Peace—another effect of humility. Peace with God. Have you offended Him? Humility appeases His anger; for, according to the saying of the saints, this virtue has the privilege of repairing all. It appeases the Lord in His greatest wrath, so much so that He equally loves the humble and the innocent. He can not but forgive the humble. "A contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. l. 19.) "Hast thou not seen Achab humbled before me?" I am disarmed. "I will not bring the evil in his days." (3 Kings, xxi. 29.) Peace with our neighbor. Pride causes anger and dissension; humility, the daughter of charity, soothes and unites hearts. How could you help loving a man who forgets himself in order to think only of others; who never disputes, save for the privilege of occupying the lower rank? Peace with one's self. "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart"; be thus "and you shall find peace for your souls." Peace is the tranquillity that results from order; now, there is nothing so orderly as the humble soul; esteem, contempt, fear, desires, everything has here its proper place—that soul knows nothing of the agitation and storms excited by pride.

III. Finally, humility is conducive to glory. No question about this, if you consider the world to come; it is the formal teaching of faith. "Thou shalt save the humble people." (Ps. xviii. 28.) "He will save the humble of heart." (Ps. xxxiii. 19.) "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 3.) So it is. "He who humbles himself shall be exalted" from the abyss of his own nothingness to the throne of immortal glory. Are we sufficiently convinced that in this very life our greatness is measured by our humility, and that we exalt ourselves in proportion as we humble ourselves before God. Ponder the following simple considerations:

The glory of man consists in fulfilling his destiny. This destiny is most noble; for he exists for no purpose than to glorify God, and the glory of God is of infinite dignity and excellence. It follows that the greatest man in reality is he who the most perfectly glorifies God. Now, humility or humiliation voluntarily accepted, sought

after for God's sake, is the best means of procuring His glory; for the Word of God Incarnate, the eternal Wisdom, coming into this world to glorify His Father, chose this means in preference to all others. "Having joy set before Him, He endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. xii. 2.) Man has more or less greatness according as he has more or less resemblance with Jesus Christ, who is all the glory of humanity, in "whom the fulness of the Divinity dwelleth corporeally." Now, as the special character of the Word made flesh was love of abjection, it follows that no man resembles Him except he who by walking in His steps embraces the folly of the cross.

Let us therefore turn in this direction the desires for distinction and all our aspirations after greatness. Let this be the subject of your colloquy with Jesus Christ when you come down from the altar: "*Creator universi hujus mundi, in sinu vilissimae creaturae! Dei Filius, Dominus dominantium, in pectore servi sui abjectissimi! Quid hoc? Nescio prae admiratione quid dicam, aut quid cogitem. Ergone satis non erat amori tuo, benignissime Jesu, te jam semel humiliatum, servi formam accepisse, vel potius, formam vermis et non hominis, quia nunc denuo apud me, infimum terrae vermiculum, divertere dignatus es? Quare pateris, O Fili Dei, ut tam faetidus peccator Sanctum sanctorum circumferat in corde squalido? Sed haec est patientia tua et humilitas tua, Domine. . . . En ego pulvis et cinis, humiliter adoro te Deum humilem.*

"*Maximas simul, quas possum, gratias ago tibi pro humillima tua obedientia, qua non solum Patri tuo, sed et mihi sacerdoti tuo indignissimo paruisti, dum mox ad voluntatem et vocem meam ingens illud. Transubstantiationis miraculum patrabas, et absque mora te praesentem in ara sistebas. . . . Venisti in hunc mundum, humil lime Jesu, non ut principatum saecularem acciperes, . . non ut omnium populorum captares plausum, . . sed ut perditum recuperares genus humanum, ut instrueres nos verbo, informares exemplo, mundares lavacro, roborares auxilio, redimeres in crucis patibulo, et pasceres sacro corpore et sanguine tuo! O caritas! O miranda humilitas! . . O Verbum caro factum, tolle a nobis omnem superbiam, ne animis unquam, efferamur, nec ulla in re gloriemur, praeterquam in te . . ; et si quid boni habere videamur, id non ex nobis ipsis, sed a te solo, bonorum omnium fonte, descendere agnoscentes, non nobis, Domine, non nobis, sed nomini tuo demus gloriam et honorem.*" (Scut. fid.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Nothing more excellent than humility considered in itself. I. It is *truth;* not speculative truth, but truth

passing from the intellect, which it enlightens, into the heart, directing its affections. Let truth reign in me, and there will be no longer any room for vanity. How good Thou art, O Lord, when Thou sendest me humiliations in greater abundance than I have courage to ask for? II. It is *justice*. Render to every man his due. Honor to whom honor is due. What is due to me, O my God, after the many sins I have committed? If I have done some good, is it I, or rather Thou, O Lord, who art to be honored therefor? III. It is the whole religion of the disciple of Jesus. It is his humility that adores and prays, acknowledging the greatness of God and his own nothingness, expecting all from God alone; it is his humility that elevates through the acquiescence of his reason, his humility that obeys through the submission of his will.

Second Point.—Nothing so excellent as humility considered in its effects. *Grace.* The prayer of the humble penetrates the clouds. Nothing can resist its efficacy. *Peace* with God. It appeases His anger. With our neighbor. Who could help loving one who forgets himself in order to think only of others. With one's self. The humble soul knoweth not the storms and agitations of pride. Glory in heaven and on earth. The man who is the greatest in reality is he who best accomplishes the end of his creation. Now, the Son of God came down from heaven to glorify His Father, and with that end in view chose humiliation preferably to any other means. Is not Jesus Christ the glory of our humanity, and can we better resemble Him than by loving abjection? Let us turn in this direction our inclination for distinction and greatness.

MEDITATION XVIII.

HUMILITY ENTIRELY NECESSARY TO THE APOSTOLIC MAN.

1.—*To Procure the Glory of God.*
2.—*To Labor Usefully for the Salvation of his Fellow Men.*
3.—*To Secure his Own Salvation.*

First Point.—Humility necessary to the priest to procure the glory of God. Three things are very necessary in order that we may fulfil the first and sublime end of the priesthood, and these humility alone can procure. They are an ardent zeal for this divine glory; a great docility to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, who desires to procure it through us; and a great fidelity to give to God all the honor of His works.

We should above all things have the interests of God at heart;

have a sincere desire to see Him known, loved, and served. But this disposition we can obtain through humility alone. Zeal is the effect of love. A heart that is full of self-love is always void of divine love. Is it to the proud that God grants the most precious of all graces, the grace of loving Him? "God giveth His grace to the humble." Is it to the proud that the Lord reveals His secrets, discovers the infinite excellence of His being? "I give Thee thanks, O Father, because Thou hast hidden these things from the wise . . . and hast revealed them to the little ones." (Matt. xi. 25.) *Humili homini se inclinat . . ; humili sua secreta revelat.* (Im. l. 2, c. 2.)

Docility to the direction of the Holy Ghost is equally necessary to us; for on it depends the efficacy of our zeal. Our work is to repair, to reproduce the noble image of God in the souls of men; for this is the principal glory that He desires. The priest is, in the hands of Jesus Christ, what the brush is in the hands of the painter. When he is humble, he is docile to the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, and does not in any way hinder His action; but when vain and presumptuous, he is like an instrument that is difficult to handle. Jesus does not dispose of him at His pleasure; He finds in him personal views opposed to His own.

The humble priest gives to God the honor of all the good he may have performed, and on this account God chooses him for the accomplishment of His designs. After performing remarkable actions, accompanied with the most brilliant success, the humble man perseveres in the conviction of his own nothingness, and exclaims in all sincerity: "The hand of the Lord hath wrought strength." (Ps. cxvii. 16.) But the proud man will never keep himself entirely out of sight; he must at least have a share with God in the glory of His works.

Great power belongs to Thee alone, O Lord, and Thou art honored by the humble only. "The power of God alone is great, and He is honored by the humble." (Eccl. iii. 21.) What power is comparable to that which Thou exercisest through Thy ministers? The more it elevates us, the more should we humble ourselves. "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things." (Ib. iii. 20.) Thou teachest us that of ourselves we are powerless. "Without Me you can do nothing." And Thy Apostle adds: "You can not even conceive a single good thought." All "our sufficiency" is from Thee, who alone canst fit us to accomplish the different functions of our ministry. Thou lovest to choose what is weakest in the world, in order to confound the strong; that which is not, in order to destroy that which is; Thou choosest the folly of the cross to con-

found proud wisdom. Such means are better adapted to show forth Thy power and sovereign independence. Thus does every glory revert to Thee, as every glory doth belong to Thee.

Second Point.—Humility necessary to the priest, that he may labor usefully for the salvation of his neighbor. Being obliged to become all unto all, in order to give all to Jesus Christ, humility alone, with its kind, modest mien, will obtain for us free access on all sides, and will make us accept the most painful undertakings. It does away with prejudice, and prepares men to love the law of God, by inducing them to love Him who announces it. Let us add that the priest who is not humble will only with reluctance perform certain functions most useful to men and blessed by heaven, though they shine less before men, such as the confession and instruction of children, the visitation of the sick, the care of the poor and infirm.

Let us finally remember that sanctification and salvation are in Jesus Christ, and that from Him alone they can come. The more we will be filled with the spirit of the Saviour, the better will we be enabled to sanctify and to save. Now, we know in whom this spirit and virtue of Jesus Christ dwells. "I will glory in my infirmities, that the power of Jesus Christ may dwell in me." (2 Cor. xii. 9.) Jesus joins Himself to the humble minister, and gives fecundity to his labors. Charmed by the humility of Mary, He came down and dwelt in the sanctuary of her bosom, to begin therein the work of our redemption; and the presence of the same virtue in the good priest brings Him down also into his heart, in order to continue through him this work of His infinite mercy.

No missionary ever preached the Gospel with as much fruit as St. Paul. Who could number the souls snatched from eternal torment by this apostle alone? But how did God make him the saviour of so many people? St. Augustine answers, by bestowing upon him a profound humility. *Prostravit Christus una vice Saulum, erexit Paulum; prostravit superbum, erexit humilem; prostratus est persecutor, erectus est preaedicator.* (Ser. iv. de temp.) The same was said of St. Bernard. *Quo humilior, eo utilior fuit populo Dei in omni doctrina salutari.* (Godf.) As a preparation for the conversion of the East Indies, St. Francis Xavier went begging his bread from door to door, and serving the poor and the sick in the hospitals.

How deeply, O my God, should I be impressed with this consideration! Thou hast placed in my hands the salvation of many, perhaps multitudes of souls! Thou desirest to convert, to save them through my ministry; but Thou wilt not perhaps employ me as an instrument of Thy grace, if Thou perceivest in me some

secret pride. I must be humble, or I shall never belong to the "breed of those men by whom salvation was brought to Israel." (1 Mach. v. 62.)

Third Point.—Humility necessary to the priest, that he may save himself. The priest stands in particular need of this virtue to protect himself against the dangers which threaten him. Those dangers are grounded upon the sublimity of his vocation, the favors lavished upon him by almighty God, and upon the attacks of the devil.

I. No one, according to the light of faith, is placed as high as the representative of Jesus Christ and the dispenser of His mysteries; no one should be more in dread of falling. *Sublimis gradus, sed eo amplius periculosa ruina.* (St. Bern.) *Gaudebo de ascensu, sed timebo de lapsu.* (St. Hier.) The pious and learned Thaulère goes so far as to say that the incomparable Virgin had as much or even more cause to humble herself than Magdalen the sinful woman, because the Mother of God, being of herself nothing, saw herself elevated to a dignity much more out of proportion with her nothingness. Nothing but a profound humility can be a sufficient foundation for the edifice of sacerdotal dignity.

II. My dependence on God is measured by the gifts which I have already received, and those which I continually receive. I shall have to give an account of the talents left in my hands. What is the inference? My judgment shall be more severe than that of the simple layman. *Tanto ergo esse humilior . . . quisque debet ex munere, quanto se obligatiorem esse conspicit in reddenda ratione; cum enim augentur dona, rationes etiam crescunt donorum.* (St. Greg. hom. ix. in Evan.)

III. The priest, being obliged by virtue of his office to uphold the cause of God, sees all the powers of the abyss opposed to him as his enemies. They give him back warfare for warfare, and, in order to destroy him, they prefer to use against him the very weapon which destroyed them; they endeavor to injure him with vain complacency, with esteem for his own excellence, and use every means to tempt him, such, for instance, as the expressions of respect due to his character, the holy functions which he performs, functions which place him in the sight of all as the teacher of the faithful, judge of consciences, and where will be the safeguard of the priest amidst so many dangers? He will find it in his humility. "The Lord is the keeper of little ones; I was humbled and He delivered me." (Ps. cxiv. 6.) *Humilitas tutissimus est omnium virtutum thesaurus.* (St. Bas.) *Humilitatem dilige, et nunquam diaboli laqueis capieris.* (St. Eph.)

If I love God, if I love my neighbor, if I have any love for my-

self, any desire for my eternal salvation, I must at any cost, by walking in the footsteps of Jesus my divine King, gain possession of the holy virtue of humility. I will therefore search in the abyss of my miseries until I have found this precious pearl. Ah, how profoundly I should humble myself, especially when I am about, as at this moment, to ascend the altar. Who am I, O God, and what is the ministry for which I am preparing? *Quid cogitabo melius et salubrius, nisi meipsum totaliter humiliando coram te? . . . Ecce tu Sanctus sanctorum et ego sordes peccatorum. Ecce tu inclinas te ad me, qui non sum dignus ad te respicere.* (Im. l. iv. c. 2.) O my good Master, what I ask for myself I also ask for all the priests who will on this day offer the most holy sacrifice of the Mass. *Miserere, miserere, Domine, misericordiam tuam poscentibus; da gratiam indigentibus, et fac nos tales existere, ut simus digni gratia tua perfrui, et ad vitam proficiamus aeternam.* (Id. c. ix.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Humility necessary to the priest, that he may procure the glory of God. This first end of the priesthood can in no way be obtained save by a total forgetfulness of self and a great love for God. These are two precious fruits of humility. In order to glorify God we should be in the hand of Jesus Christ what the brush is in the hand of the artist. Now, such docility is incompatible with pride. God chooses the weak, or those who entertain a humble opinion of themselves, in order to confound the strong, or those who glory in their strength.

Second Point.—Humility necessary to the priest, that he may labor usefully for the conversion of others. We must become all in all; humility alone can give us access to the hearts of others. Charmed by the humility of Mary, Jesus Christ sought the sanctuary of her immaculate womb in order to begin the work of our salvation; and the same virtue will attract Him to the hearts of His priests, to continue through them His mystery of mercy toward men.

Third Point.—Humility necessary to the priest, in order to save himself. None but the foundation of perfect humility can sustain the sublime edifice of sacerdotal dignity. *Tanto esse humilior quisque debet ex munere, quanto se obligatiorem esse conspicit in reddenda ratione.* All kinds of dangers surround the priest; for him there is no security save in humility. "The Lord is the keeper of little ones; I was humbled and He delivered me."

MEDITATION XIX.

REPETITION OF THE THREE PRECEDING ONES. HUMILITY.

He is truly humble who despises himself through the knowledge he has of his own nothingness, and receives with patience, and even with joy, through love for justice and truth, the contempt which he deserves. He has the humility of apostolic men who preserves an unchanged disposition of heart when honored and admired for success obtained in the discharge of his sublime ministry.

1.—*Nothing Greater in Reality than Humility.*
2.—*Nothing more Indispensable.*
3.—*Nothing more Advantageous.*
4.—*Nothing more Just and Reasonable.*

First Point.—Nobleness and grandeur of humility. It imparts to me the most devoted and useful science, the true and blessed liberty of the children of God. *Haec est altissima et utilissima lectio, sui ipsius vera cognitio et despectio.* (Im. l. 1, c. 2.) Is there any man more deplorably ignorant than the man who has no knowledge of self? Is there a greater slave than he who desires to be esteemed by creatures? It gives me a striking resemblance with Jesus Christ, whom St. Paul describes in the words: *Semetipsum exinanivit.* If, therefore, I am pleased with this state of debasement, of which He made choice, I have the sentiments of my Saviour; I wear His livery; I am as another Christ. Lucifer had said: "I will ascend, I will raise my throne above the stars, and I shall be like unto the Most High." He was cast down into the bottom of hell. As for me, I shall lower myself; I shall choose abjection, and by despising myself more and more, I shall become more like unto God annihilated through love of me. "I have chosen to be an abject." "I will make myself . . . meaner than I have done." (2 Kings, vi. 22.) By associating myself with His reproaches I shall associate myself with His glory. As humility is the ladder by which God descended to our nothingness, so it is by it also that our nothingness rises up to God Himself. Without it we should have neither God made man nor man made God.

Second Point.—Indispensable to the priest. Without humility I am, at most, a useless priest. What can I do for the glory

of God, the salvation of others, for my own soul? Will the Lord employ *me* to accomplish His designs of mercy toward the souls of men? I would rob Him of the glory thereof. To convert, sanctify, and save souls is a purely supernatural and divine work; man alone can do nothing of this kind. Jesus accomplishes it through His faithful ministers, by endowing them with all the helps of His grace, but His grace is for the humble; and instead of assisting the proud He resists them.

Without humility I am an unfortunate priest, always at war with my conscience and with my faith, tormented by remorse, pronouncing my own condemnation in the truths which I teach, in the advices which I give. O what a spectacle I become to heaven and earth! A priest full of vanity, loving human glory, fond of praise, desiring the first place, sensitive to insult, flattering the great, despising the lowly. Is such an one a representative of the God made man, made flesh, made a slave, of God annihilated?

Without humility I am a lost priest. Everything becomes a snare, everything leads me down to eternal perdition. Prosperity inflates me, adversity discourages me; my regularity, my conduct, cause me to slumber in baneful security; my apparent virtues are vices; my zeal is praised, and I go on soliciting human praise. Nay, the favors of heaven themselves are for me a source of dangers; the gift of tears, the gift of prophecy would be for my soul a most deadly poison. What, then, is a priest without humility? He is a blind man who takes upon himself the task of leading other blind men. Whither will he lead them? Whither is he going with them? We may say that he is a man who is neither a Christian nor a priest; for he has not the most essential virtue of the Christian, nor the most indispensable one of the priesthood.

Third Point.—Nothing more advantageous. It obtains for me the most solid advantages which I can desire, either for myself or for those under my charge.

I. As for myself, can I sufficiently reflect upon these words of the following of Christ? *Humilem Deus protegit et liberat; humilem diligit et consolatur; humili homini se inclinat; humili largitur gratiam magnam, et post ejus depressionem levat ad gloriam. Humili sua secreta revelat, et ad se dulciter trahit et invitat.* (Imit. l. 2, c. 2.) Humility is the true wisdom which is the source of all good. "All good things came to me together with her." (Wisd. vii. 11.) As a priest, as a Christian, I am ever upon the battlefield. To the right, to the left, when at work, when at rest, I see multitudes of the enemy surrounding me, and the most to be dreaded are those

within me; but, if God will defend me, if He will be my protector, what need I fear? Can He not deliver me from all evil, and snatch me if He will from the very gates of hell? This He will do if I am humble. *Humilem Deus protegit et liberat.* I shall enjoy neither the esteem nor the affection of men! What shall I lose by that? I shall be beloved by God! Is not this the most desirable of all blessings? To be loved of God! to be the object of His particular tenderness! O you apostles, martyrs, holy priests, elect of all conditions, what did you not do and sacrifice in order to obtain this blessedness? Humility will bestow it upon me. *Humilem Deus diligit.* But what about afflictions and trials? What of the most painful of all trials for the heart of the good priest, the conviction that all my efforts for the salvation of souls are useless? God will comfort me. Years of abundance will succeed years of sterility, and in case that I should not have the joy of bringing back the stray sheep to the fold, there would be granted to me another joy far greater and more solid, the joy of having done the will of my heavenly Father. I would hear Him say to me that He has recorded all my desires, that He sees the tears of my eyes, that He loves me! *Humilem consolatur.* But I have offended the Lord; I have driven Him far from me, by my pride. I fell into the abyss of sin! If I humble myself God stoops to the level of my misery in order to raise me up. *Humili homini se inclinat;* wherefore St. Augustine wrote these remarkable words, that God is better pleased with humility in sinfulness than with pride in good actions. What then is wanting to me if I am humble? Grace? God lavishes it upon me. *Humili largitur gratiam magnam.* Glory? It follows humiliation. *Post ejus depressionem levat ad gloriam.* Is it the knowledge which enlighteneth, the charity which inflames? God invites me to come to Him. He sweetly attracts me by revealing to me something of His ineffable perfection. . . . Precious humility! such are the riches thou conferrest upon me. *Humili sua secreta revelat, et ad se dulciter trahit et invitat.*

II. I shall also find in this virtue the source of benedictions which give fruitfulness to the sacerdotal ministry. "He who believes in Me," says the Saviour, that is, he who leans upon and confides in Me, "the works which I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do." (Joan. xiv. 12.) It is not man who by one of his discourses converts thousands of others, who by his very shadow heals all kinds of infirmities, as was done by St. Peter, who had become so humble after his conversion. God confides precious talents to the faithful steward who will not appropriate anything to himself in the management of His interests. But if

any should glory in his success, should he dare say or think: It is I who have converted this sinner, sanctified this just soul? We wonder at the success of the labors of St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Francis Xavier, St. Vincent of Paul, and of other apostolic men. They were humble, they were the friends of God, the faithful depositories of His power. The promises of Jesus Christ are not in vain. "He who believes in Me, the works which I do, he also shall do, and greater than these shall he do."

Fourth Point.—Nothing more just and reasonable. We here speak of the practice of humility considered under its most difficult, but also its most excellent aspect. We consider humility in greatness, the lowest sentiments of oneself united with the most sublime elevation. Through humility it is that Jesus Christ attributes to His Father all the wonders which He had performed. "Of Myself I do nothing." (Joan. xiv. 10.) Through humility Mary confesses herself the handmaid of the Lord, when she becomes His Mother, and acknowledges her own nothingness in proportion to the honor that God confers upon her. Through humility St. Peter and St. John, after performing a wonderful miracle, declare to the admiring Jews: "Ye men of Israel, why wonder you at this? Or why look you on us, as though by our strength or power we had made this man to walk? The God . . . of our fathers hath glorified His Son Jesus." (Acts iii. 12, 13.) Finally, through humility did all the evangelical laborers, who left us the most admirable examples, think themselves unprofitable servants, though their labors had been stupendous and the conversions they had obtained innumerable.

There is nothing more just than this disposition. As in Jesus Christ the humanity could do nothing supernatural, save through its union with the Divinity, so also apostolic men can do nothing except by their union with the Son of God. "I am the vine, you are the branches. The branch can bear no fruit, unless it remains in the vine: neither can you, unless you remain in Me." Justice, therefore, and reason demand that I should conclude with St. Paul, and say to myself: *Ubi est ergo gloriatio tua? Quid habes quod non accepisti? Si autem accepisti, quid gloriaris, quasi non acceperis?* "Neither is he that planteth anything; nor he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase." Let us unite our voice to that of St. Paul, and exclaim, "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen." (1 Tim. i. 17.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Nobleness and grandeur of humility. It imparts to us the most useful and most rare of all sciences, the knowledge of ourselves. It transforms all the faithful into the image of Jesus Christ. As humility is the ladder by which God descended to our nothingness, by it also does our nothingness ascend to the Divinity. Without it we should have neither God made man nor man made God.

Second Point.—Absolute necessity of humility. Without it I am at most a useless priest. What can I do for the glory of God, the salvation of others, or my own? Without it I am an unhappy priest, ever at war with my conscience and with my faith. Without it I am a lost priest. Everything becomes a snare, everything draws upon me eternal misfortune.

Third Point.—Treasures contained in humility. O my soul, ponder these words: *Humilem Deus protegit et liberat; humilem diligit et consolatur; humili homini se inclinat; humili largitur gratiam magnam, et post ejus depressionem levat ad gloriam. Humili sua secreta revelat, et ad se dulciter trahit et invitat.* (Im.)

Fourth Point.—Nothing more just and conformable to reason. As in Jesus Christ the sacred humanity could do nothing save by virtue of its union with the Divinity, so also man, whoever he may be, can do nothing except by his union with Jesus Christ. "To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen."

MEDITATION XX.

THE WORD INCARNATE TEACHES US TO ESTEEM AND LOVE VIRGINAL PURITY.

1.—*Love of Jesus Christ for Virginity.*
2.—*Reasons why we should Love it.*

First Point.—Love of Jesus Christ for virginal purity. Let us consider these words of St. Bonaventure: *Christus virgo, virginis filius, virginum sponsus.* (L. ii. De P. Relig., c. liii.)

I. *Christus virgo.* By uniting Himself to our nature, the Son of God adorned it in His person with a purity to which nothing can be compared. His blessed soul from the first moment of His conception took an absolute empire over His body, destined to be the instrument of so many miraculous operations; and left this sacred body nothing of our weaknesses, save the power to suffer and to

die. Virgins are formed upon this model, withdrawing, as it were, the flesh from the flesh itself, in order to live a merely spiritual life. But whilst others are virgins only by doing violence to their inclinations, it must be said of the Saviour that His virginal purity is as natural to Him as whiteness is natural to the lily. Others are pure to a certain degree only; He alone is pure in an infinite degree of perfection. Others would not of themselves attain this sublime state; but He has in Himself the principle of purity. Purity in Him is not a privilege, but the necessary consequence of the hypostatic union; it is the ornament of a body deified, and more pure than all the spirits. Now, as He loves this virtue in Himself, so He loves it in all those who approach Him; and it ought to be the more perfect in those who draw nigher unto Him.

II. *Christus virginis filius.* St. Leo calls Jesus Christ the Son of virginity, and St. Ambrose tells us that He was born in a manner all virginal, both in eternity and in time. The bosom in which He has been eternally conceived is the divinity of His Father, and that in which He was formed in the fulness of time is the virginity of His Mother. Mary thinks of refusing to be the Mother of God, if this dignity can not be reconciled with her vow of perpetual virginity; and this it was which fixed upon her the choice of God. To show the esteem that He has of this virtue, by His eternal decree, Mary was to be holy, immaculate in her conception and in all her life; this was not enough, she was moreover to be a virgin. By this glorious quality she will be distinguished from all others; from generation to generation she will be called Virgin, the most holy Virgin, the Virgin of virgins. Her virginity is, so to say, the charm which caused the Son of God to come down into her bosom. *Virginitate placuit.* (St. Bern.) By this she merited her incomprehensible dignity as far as it could be merited. *Tantae extitit puritatis, ut mater Domini esse mereretur.* (St. H. ad Eust.) She is a virgin in body, a virgin in soul, a virgin by profession, and therefore the angel comes to salute her "full of grace," and to inform her of the great designs of God upon her person.

III. *Christus virginum sponsus.* Jesus did not become the King of virgins only by founding on earth a state of perfection unknown before the Gospel. He also became their Spouse, and this He clearly shows by the favors He has in store for them. Virgins have a special right to say with the spouse of the Canticle, "My beloved is mine, and I am His." They are more closely united to Jesus Christ than the other just, and Jesus Christ more united to them. They have left all things to follow Him, separated themselves from all that was most dear to them in the world, to

adhere to Him alone; and by this estrangement from creatures they have clothed themselves with a new kind of beauty so admirable that it ravishes the heart of the celestial Spouse. "Hearken, O daughter, and see, and incline thy ear; and forget thy people and thy father's house," and renounce even lawful inclinations; "the king shall greatly desire thy beauty." (Ps. xliv. 12, 13.)

Who, next to Mary, was more beloved of Jesus Christ than St. Joseph? Who had a greater share in His divine caresses? But he was a virgin, and the guardian of Mary's virginity. Amongst the apostles, all of whom were honored with Our Lord's predilection, there was one who deserved to be called, and who in reality was, "the disciple whom Jesus loved." It was he who had made himself more perfect in purity. St. John, at the Last Supper, with the unreserved confidence of a friend, lays his head on the bosom of Jesus, and freely questions Him, when St. Peter himself dared not speak, and the secrets of heaven were then revealed to him; but all these favors were the reward of his virginity. *Virgo permansit, et ideo plus amatur a Domino.* (St. Hier.) For this, also, did Jesus dying commend to him His Blessed Mother. *Matrem virginem virgini commendavit.* (Ib.) As it were to signify that the loss of a Son, who is God, could be compensated for (if compensation were possible) only by the adoption of a son who was a virgin.

The Spouse of virgins ever conferred special privileges on those who were more remarkable for this virtue. St. Bernard, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Louis Gonzaga, St. Stanislaus, led on earth the life of angels. But the prerogatives of this heavenly virtue are not limited to this present life. Amongst all the elect, says St. John, those alone will be chosen to compose the cortège of the Lamb on whose brow will shine the halo of virginity. They will follow Him whithersoever He shall go; and they will sing a hymn which virgins only will be permitted to sing. For them there will be joys distinct from those of all the other saints. *Gaudia a caeterorum omnium gaudiorum sorte distincta . . . gaudia propria virginum Christi.* (St. Aug. de virg.) O priest, thank God for having called you to a profession so holy and happy.

Second Point.—Motives which incite us to love virginal purity. We have just considered the motive which most strongly impresses good priests, that is, the predilection of Jesus Christ for this virtue; but as it ought to be perfect in us, it is well to unite under one aspect the principal motives which recommend it to our love.

I. Its excellence. Virginity can be comprehended by none but generous souls. "All do not." For this reason it was not revealed

to men when the world was in its infancy. God made man could alone establish it on earth; and this He has done, not as a precept, but as a counsel; it was too exalted, says St. Bernard, to become the object of a commandment.

II. Its beauty. It is in the spiritual order what the verdure of meadows, the coloring of flowers, the luster of gold, the brilliancy of precious stones, are in the material order; but no, nothing amongst the things of earth can be compared to it. The amiable virtue (such is the name of purity) is beloved when present, regretted when lost; its crown shines so sweetly! Its triumph has eternity for its duration! "No price is worthy of a continent soul." (Ecclus. xxvi. 20.) "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory." (Wisd. iv. 1.) "The memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men." (Ib.)

III. It is on earth an image, and an anticipation of the heavenly life. "Blessed state of the virgin!" says St. Bernard. He enjoys by anticipation the privileges of the resurrection; he lives in the world and is not defiled by its contagion; he is equal to the angels, by his dignity and nobleness! St. Ambrose says to the virgin: "Wonder not that angels fight for you, for you yourself fight under their standard, when you fight under that of virginity." Chastity makes angels. The heavenly spirits are the virgins of heaven; virgins are the angels of earth. The former are not clothed with flesh; the second triumph in the flesh.

Virginal purity does more than render us equal to angels; it gives us, as it were, pre-eminence over them. What is there to wonder at their being chaste? They are not, as are we, composed of flesh and blood, exposed to the violence of concupiscence. They have no need to eat or drink; they are not accessible to the allurements of seduction which assail us. It is more glorious to acquire the glory of angels by repeated victories than to possess it without any effort, as the angels do. That which for the one is a privilege of nature is for the other the result of many courageous efforts.

IV. This virtue places us near to God. It reproduces within us the image of His incorruptibility. In order to find the first principle and the most perfect type thereof, you must ascend to the Most Holy Trinity. Here you will adore an infinitely fruitful virginity, and an infinitely virginal fecundity. Hence St. Gregory Nazianzen says, *Prima virgo Trias est.*

It clothes us with that respect and veneration which so powerfully contributes to the success of our apostolic labors. It is chiefly by virginal chastity that the good odor of our life embalms and rejoices the holy spouse of the Saviour. *Sit odor vitae vestrae delectamentum Ecclesiae Christi.* (Pont.) When men saw the

Catholic clergy dedicate themselves to a virtue so hard to be practised, in order the better to mitigate their sorrows and remedy their ills, they could not withhold their admiration of them, and the doctrine of salvation penetrated their minds, because of the esteem they had for those who preached it.

All this accounts for the concert of praise given to virginal chastity by the Doctors of the Church. They call it "the flower of religion," the riches of the Church, the honor of human nature, the character which consecrates the most illustrious portion of the flock of Jesus Christ. With it, conscience is in peace, the mind is enlightened, serenity illumines the countenance, joy is within the soul, death is tranquil, the promise of heaven is certain. O virginity, thy riches are untold, the immortal crown is thine, and art not thou thyself a crown of great brilliancy? Virginity, temple of God, sanctuary of the Holy Spirit, precious pearl, known but to a few and found by even a smaller number! O continence, life of the angels, glorious diadem on the brow of the elect! Blessed is he who possesses thee, blessed he who, in order to preserve thee, accepts all the sacrifices which thou requirest; he will find in thee an inexhaustible source of delights. The language here quoted is that of St. Athanasius, St. Cyprian, St. Ephrem, St. Bernard, and St. Lawrence Justinian.

You will soon go to the altar! Oh if, instead of your own heart, you could bring thither the heart of Mary conceived without sin! But since Jesus Christ is the "purity of virgins," since His sacred blood which you are about to receive contains the fruitful germ of virginal purity, beseech Him to purify you through the virtue of this sacred blood, and to render your chastity unalterable.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Love of Jesus Christ for virginity. He was a virgin. By uniting Himself to our nature, He adorned it with incomparable purity. Others are virgins only by doing violence to their inclinations; virginal purity was natural to the Saviour, as whiteness is natural to the lily. Jesus Christ the Son of a Virgin. St. Leo calls Him the Son of virginity; because of this virtue Mary was chosen to be His Mother. Jesus Christ the Spouse of virgins. To them He grants the most precious favors. Virgins have left all to follow Him, and by this voluntary estrangement from creatures they have conquered His heart. Think of the admirable graces He bestowed upon St. Joseph, St. John, St. Bernard, St. Anthony of Padua! A halo of special brilliancy will shine around the brow of virgins in heaven.

Second Point.—Motives for loving virginal purity. Its excellence. The Word Incarnate alone could establish it on earth. Its beauty. In the spiritual order, it may be compared to the coloring of flowers, the brilliancy of gold in the material order; or rather, nothing amongst the things of earth can be compared to it. It is an image of heaven, likens men unto angels. It gives us a sort of pre-eminence over them. It raises us up to God, reproduces within us the image of His incorruptibility. This accounts for the concert of praise bestowed by the Holy Doctors upon virginal chastity. *Jesu puritas virginum, miserere nobis.*

MEDITATION XXI.

SACERDOTAL CHASTITY. SACREDNESS OF THE TIES WHICH OBLIGE US TO PRACTISE IT.

1.—*The Obligation Contracted on the Day of our Ordination.*

2.—*Our Titles.*

3.—*The Functions We have to Perform.*

First Point.—The solemn pledge of our ordination. Recall to mind the moment in which you promised the Lord to live forever the life of a virgin. How powerful the emotion of your heart during the impressive ceremony! You advanced toward the altar, wearing not the clerical habit alone, as at preceding ordinations, but you were clothed with the alb, the symbol of innocence; it was the robe of the angels in the sepulcher of Jesus risen from the dead. "Angels in white." You stood before the throne of the Lamb. "Standing before the throne in presence of the Lamb." The sacred vestments placed upon your arm were as so many palms, emblems of the victories you had gained over the world and over yourself. "And they had palms in their hands." It was not now a paternal allocution that the consecrating pontiff addressed to you; he expressed a formal condition. "You are still free," he said, *Hactenus liberi estis;* but if you come forward you shall be devoted to a state of perpetual continency; return to the world shall be impossible. Think seriously, therefore, and if resolved to remain immovable in your holy determination, "in the name of the Lord advance." *Si in sancto proposito perseverare placet, in nomine Domini, huc accedite!* The condition is accepted, the step is taken, the threshold of the sanctuary is passed, the eternal promise is made. Instantly all the elect prostrate upon the pavement, like unto so many victims which received the sacrificial blow. They are indeed dead to the desires of the

flesh. They no longer belong to the world of the senses. If they live, their life is hidden with Jesus Christ in God. (Col. iii. 3.)

Was there ever a more solemn consecration? You made it after mature reflection, in the house of God, before the altar. You ratified it by touching the sacred vessels and the book of the Holy Gospels, you sealed it with the blood of Christ in holy communion. What remains for you to do, save to fulfil the clauses of this heavenly compact.

Second Point.—Our titles. As clerics, we are the inheritance of the Lord, who Himself condescended to become our own inheritance. *Christi estis nempe de sorte Domini; et ipse Dominus sors, pars scilicet vestra.* (Conc. Mediol. iv.) But shall we be the inheritance of Jesus Christ if our heart be divided? As priests, we are the "angels of the Lord of hosts." (Mal. ii. 7.) God will have angels for the government of His Church, which is His earthly kingdom, as He has angels as officers of His heavenly kingdom. The angelical virtue is therefore indispensable to the priest. "They shall neither marry nor be married, but are as the angels in heaven." Each of us, said St. Bernard, is the father and mother of Jesus Christ. *Pater Christi generando, mater Christi pariendo.* We every day give Him a new birth; but we know all that there was of virginal purity in the two-fold nativity of the Saviour, the temporal and the eternal. Our chastity, therefore, should be like that of Mary, and if possible like that of God Himself.

We are His vicars, His ambassadors, His representatives. Shall we uphold the honor due those titles, and especially to the last-named, if our virtue in this respect does not shine so conspicuously as to recommend us to the veneration of the people? *Tales decet Dominum habere ministros, qui . . . continentia castitatis splendeant.* (St. Aug.) If the purity of our life is not known of all, shall we represent Him who said to His most obstinate enemies, "Which of you will convince Me of sin." Great as was their hatred of Him, they never dared to express a doubt concerning the perfection of His purity. When they perceive that He allows persons of questionable character to approach Him, they merely infer that He knows them not, and that therefore He is not God; they would sooner doubt His divinity than His purity. O Priest, will you be His image if your chastity be not acknowledged by all?

Third Point.—The functions which we must perform demand an eminent purity. The most divine of our functions is that which we perform at the altar. The Church sends the priest up for this purpose. *Ut offerat dona et sacrificia pro peccatis.* (Heb. v. 1.) What are the gifts, what is the sacrifice which we are

commissioned to offer? What is the virtue which we present to the Almighty? *Hostiam puram, hostiam sanctam, hostiam immaculatam.* The priests of old immolated oxen and heifers, they placed material loaves on the altar of the Lord, and in order to be fit to accomplish this function, all carnal intercourse during all the time of their service in the temple was forbidden them. What, then, should be the purity of him who holds in his hands and offers to God a victim as holy as God Himself, a victim who is God. *Illius solius est offerre sacrificium, qui indesinenti et perpetuae se devoverit castitati.* (Orig. Hom. 23, in lib. Num.) *Si Redemptor noster tantopere dilexit floridi pudoris integritatem, ut non modo de virginali utero nasceretur, sed etiam a nutritio virgine tractaretur, et hoc cum adhuc parvulus vagiret in cunis, a quibus nunc, obsecro, tractari vult corpus suum, cum jam immensus regnat in coelis?* (St. Peter Dam. Op. 17. de cœlib. sacerd.)

Besides the sacrifice of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, we offer to God the sacrifice of our lips; our prayer should ascend before His throne as an odor of sweet incense, to reunite to Him sinful men, since this is the end of both these sacrifices. Now the offering of the latter requires of us almost as much purity as the offering of the former; for when St. Paul desires the Christian to abstain sometimes from what is lawful, that they may the more perfectly attend to prayer, he clearly teaches us the great power which chastity imparts to prayer, and how perfectly those should practise it, who, having to direct public prayer, are officially bound, as mediators, to avert all scourges, and draw down from heaven all benedictions. "They who are in the flesh can not please God." (Rom. vii. 8.)

The preaching of the word of God and the administration of the Sacraments impose upon us the same obligation. The great Apostle said to the Corinthians: "By the Gospel I have begotten you," and to Philemon, "I beseech thee for my son, whom I have begotten in my bonds, Onesimus." We are established the ministers of this mysterious generation, which gives to God the children of the New Covenant; and Bossuet, comparing this new fecundity of the priest to that of the Blessed Virgin, declares that each of these demands truly angelical purity. Let us add that the flesh speaks ill the language of the spirit, and that the Spirit of God does not ordinarily take a carnal man for His interpreter and organ. As to the Sacraments which we administer, he who with unclean hands treats things that are so pure profanes that which is the most venerable in religion. *Tradunt aliis quod contaminaverunt.* (Tert. lib. de dol., c. 7.) What should be said of the tribunal of penance? Can he sit there as a minister useful

to others, and free from danger to himself, whose chastity is not so secure as to make him proof against all temptations?

My vows, my titles, my functions, all that I am, all that I do, demand of me to be pure as an angel. Has this been the case with me in the past? If my body has been chaste, was it also true of my mind and heart? Were they always as perfectly pure as Thou hast a right to expect of me?

As a preparation for Mass, beseech the Blessed Virgin to obtain pardon for you of everything that may have tarnished the beauty of this flower; by far the most beautiful, but also the most delicate of all those which compose your sacerdotal wreath. Renew your sacred promise in presence of the august Virgin, begging of her to obtain grace for you to be ever faithful to it.

Résumé of the Meditation.

Sacredness of the ties which oblige us to practise chastity.

First Point.—The solemn promise of our ordination. On that day the condition was set down; it was accepted. Was there ever a more sacred engagement, made after more mature deliberation? It was sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ through holy communion. *Vota mea Domino reddam.*

Second Point.—Our titles. As priests, we are the angels of the God of hosts. God desires to have angels for the government of His Church, as for that of His heavenly kingdom. We are the ambassadors, the representatives of Jesus Christ. Shall I be an image of Him, if my chastity is not above suspicion? "Who of you will convince Me of sin?"

Third Point.—The functions which we have to perform. What is the victim which we offer at the altar? *Illius solius est offerre sacrificium, qui indesinenti et perpetuae se devoverit castitati.* The sacrifice of praise, public supplication, demand of us almost as much purity. Bossuet compares the divine fecundity of the priest who gives spiritual children to God with that of Mary; declares that each of the two requires truly angelical purity. What shall we say of the Sacraments we administer, and especially of the Sacrament of Penance?

MEDITATION XXII.

THE THREE GUARDIANS OF SACERDOTAL CHASTITY.

1.—*Humility.*
2.—*Vigilance.*
3.—*Generosity.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Timothy, loaded with infirmities, exhausted by mortification and apostolic labors; you would be surprised to hear St. Paul address to him as many as three times a recommendation of which it would seem that he had not the least need.

Second Prelude.—Beseech the Holy Ghost to teach you how to preserve intact a treasure so precious, and since it is to Him that you are indebted for it, supplicate Him to protect you against the perfidious enemy who endeavors to rob you of it. *Hostem repellas longius.*

First Point.—Humility first guardian of sacerdotal chastity. Is it not temerity to expose one's self to danger, the most universal cause of the failings which dishonor the sanctuary? We are very near the abyss when we know ourselves so little as to confide in our own strength. Chastity, says St. Francis de Sales, is a timid, delicate, distrustful virtue; a word, a look, suffices to startle it. "Blessed is the man that is always fearful." (Prov. xxviii. 14.) The great danger in this matter consists in not believing in danger. Neither sacredness of character, progress in the way of perfection, nor advanced age can give complete security. The priest has not ceased to be a man, the sacerdotal unction has not extinguished the fire of concupiscence which courses through our veins, and our only privilege in this matter consists in being more fiercely tempted; we feel more inclined to transgress the commandment which is more strictly enjoined.

We therefore must fear. *Nec in præterita castitate confidas, nec sanctior Davide, nec Samsone fortior, nec Salomone potes esse sapientior.* It is often that a miserable temptation has changed the heart of the most virtuous priest into the heart of a reprobate. So great is our natural infirmity, so cunning the devil, contagion is so universal, and the occasions so many, that unless he be cautious even to excess (if there can be excess in the matter), the priest, were he a saint, will soon be a sinful priest, a fallen angel. Let us consider the words of St. Jerome. *Plurimi sanctissimi viri ceciderunt hoc vitio, propter suam securitatem.* Here are stronger

expressions of St. Augustine: *Crede mihi episcopus sum, veritatem loquor in Christo, non mentior: cedros Libani et gregum arietes . . . corruisse vidi, de quorum casu non magis praesumebam, quam Gregorii Nazianzeni aut Ambrosii.*

Old age does not give complete security in the matter, and gray hair does not shelter from temptation. The accusers of chaste Susanna were men advanced in age, and Solomon was old when he suffered his heart to be depraved. "When he was now old, his heart was turned away by women." (3 Kings, xi. 4.)

Blessed is the priest who is ever filled with a salutary fear on this score. *In hac parte expedit plus bene timere, quam male fidere.* (St. Cyp.) Self-confidence in this matter easily begets presumption; "God gives His grace to the humble, but He resists the proud." In the midst of the most indispensable relations with the world, in the following of the most generally accepted usages of society, in the discharge of the most holy functions of the ministry, everywhere there are snares laid for the purity of the priest. If you ask with St. Anthony, Who shall be able to escape so many perils? you will be answered as he was: *Sola humilitas secura transire potest.* If you wish to be chaste, says St. Ambrose, be humble. If you wish to be very chaste, be very humble.

Second Point.—Vigilance. It is the consequence of an humble diffidence of one's self, and of the knowledge one has of the dangers he is exposed to. A wise man obliged to follow a slippery path lined with precipices does not go on with his eyes shut; he carefully considers where to place his feet. We carry the treasure of chastity in frail vessels; on the other hand the cruel, treacherous enemy, who is bent upon our destruction, strives to rob us of this treasure especially. Surprise, inattention may precipitate us to the bottom of the abyss. As the good priest knows that continence is the effect of grace, he fails not to beg it of God; but he moreover makes himself worthy of receiving it by obeying the divine precept of vigilance, so many times inculcated in the Gospel. Is it not remarkable that the precept of vigilance is repeated as many as five times in the same chapter? (Mark, ix.) Vigilance is the lamp which the wise servant carries lighted in his hand, that he may see his way, and detect the snares of the enemy. Watchful over himself and over the impressions received from exterior objects, he prevents temptations, and diminishes their violence, through promptitude in fighting them. He knows that a spark is easier extinguished than a great fire, and that the greater part of the most remarkable downfalls had but slight beginnings.

The good priest extends his watchfulness to everything, because there is not anything that may not become a dangerous occasion.

He keeps particular guard over his imagination, the reveries of which are so fatal to innocence. From these, indeed, much evil may come, if the eye of the soul does not keep a strict watch, so as to perceive them from a distance, and exclude them from the mind. He watches over his heart, in order to repress in time affections or attachments too natural or human. He watches over all his exterior senses, and attaches much importance to the modesty of the eyes. "I made a covenant with my eyes, that I would not so much as think upon a virgin." (Job, xxxi. 1.) *Visum sequitur cogitatio, cogitationem delectatio, delectationem consensus.* (St. Aug.)

He is on guard against his zeal and the sentiments it inspires him with, "lest, having begun by the spirit, He would end by the flesh." (Gal. iii. 3.) But he is most particularly on the watch about his relations with persons whose age and sex might compromise his virtue or good name. *Fugiendae in primis cum mulieribus collocutiones . . . ; atque etiam ubi nos necessitas adegerit, ab ipsis non secus atque ab igne cavendum est, adeo ut quam ocissime, nulla mora, ab istis nos extricemus.* (St. Bas.)

Third Point.—Generosity. No virtue requires so much generosity as virginal chastity. We have continually to fight against an enemy who never leaves us, since he is a part of ourself. How often are we not under necessity to "cut off the hand, to pluck out the eye!" How often does it not become for us a duty to practise the counsel of the imitation! *Subtrahere se violenter ab eo ad quod natura vitiose inclinatur!* (L. 1, c. xxv.) There are ties which a prudent man will not loosen; hé breaks them asunder. There are victories which can be gained only by flight. *Apprehende fugam, si vis obtinere victoriam.* (St. Aug., s. ccl. de temp.)

What did not the saints do to preserve their chastity! What did they not suffer and sacrifice rather than tarnish its brightness! How many tears did it not cost to St. Augustine, how many watchings to St. Jerome, how many fastings to St. Hilarion, how many macerations to many other great servants of God, how many mortifications to all! How many there were, who, to save it, willingly gave up their lives, uniting the palm of martyrdom to that of virginity! The fortitude which it demands does in one respect surpass that of the martyrs; the combat of the latter is violent, but does not last; that of the virgins lasts their whole life long.

Let us glorify and bear God in our bodies, and make of our body a sacrifice, "living, holy, pleasing to God," of which the immolation may be united to the oblation of Jesus Christ on the altar. (Rom. xii. 1.) Where shall we look for the mortification of Jesus Christ, if it is not found in those who every day nourish themselves with the sacred flesh of Jesus Christ crucified? *Ure*

igne Sancti Spiritus renes nostros et cor nostrum, Domine ut tibi casto corpore serviamus et mundo corde placcamus. (Missal.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Humility, first guardian of sacerdotal chastity. One is very near falling into the abyss when depending on himself. "Blessed is the man that is always fearful." Neither sacredness of character, nor progress in perfection, nor even old age, can give complete security. *Plurimi sanctissimi viri ceciderunt hoc vitio propter suam securitatem.* Each of those words should be considered with attention. *Sola humilitas secura transire potest.*

Second Point.—Vigilance. This is indeed the effect of an humble diffidence of one's self. We carry a precious treasure in frail vessels; surprise, inattention may destroy everything. Vigilance is that shining lamp which the wise man carries to light his ways. He watches particularly over his imagination, his heart, and exterior senses. He does not neglect to keep watch even over his zeal, but he is more particularly on the watch about his relations with persons whose age and sex might compromise his virtue or reputation.

Third Point.—Generosity. There are ties which a prudent priest does not loosen; he breaks them asunder; and there are also victories which can be gained by flight only. What did not the saints do in order to preserve this rich treasure? Remember St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. Jerome.

MEDITATION XXIII.

NATIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST. HIS POVERTY.

The Word Incarnate has been Saviour from the first moment of His conception. In His nativity He begins exterior functions of this mission, by the practise of the most perfect poverty.

1.—*Poverty of Jesus Christ in His Nativity.*
2.—*How It Tends to Save Us.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the abandoned stable in which the Saviour is born; remark all the details. What do you find therein? What is there wanting in it? Do you find there all that is useful, agreeable, or even necessary?

Second Prelude.—Give me, O my God, an intimate knowledge of the interior disposition of Thy Son at His nativity. Give me His perfect detachment from the goods of earth.

First Point.—Poverty of Jesus Christ in the mystery of His nativity.

I. It is extreme. I go in spirit to the place of His nativity, expected through so many ages. Who would not have believed that the Son of the Most High would have been born in the grandest palace of the world; would have been clothed in purple; that gold would shine about His cradle? Yet what do I see? What destitution? No furniture, no house, no fire in the heart of winter. The most indigent of men have a roof to protect them; and behold Him consigned to a grotto, exposed to the inclemency of the weather. Poor swaddling clothes to cover Him, a manger and straw in lieu of a cradle; two animals to warm Him with their breath. In this apparel does the Master of the world make His entrance into the world He comes to save.

It is true that this state in which Jesus was born at Bethlehem will not be permanent; He will not be there always; He will, however, be always poor, and as in His incarnation He espoused humility and never quit it, so in His nativity He takes poverty for His inseparable companion. It will follow Him into Egypt, to Nazareth, in the course of His preaching, always and everywhere. He will at the age of thirty say what He might have said on the first day of His life. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man has not where to lay His head." On Calvary He will not have even rags to cover Him, nor a glass of water to quench His thirst. *Pauper in nativitate, pauperior in vita, pauperrimus in cruce.* (St. Ber. de Pass. c. 2.)

II. The poverty of my Saviour is accompanied with sufferings and humiliations. Is not poverty the companion of privations and sacrifices of all kinds? The first idea connected with the name of a *poor man* is that of a person who suffers; indigence without want would be a contradiction in terms. The same should be said of humiliations. They are, as it were, an unavoidable part of the condition of the poor, who are despised by a blind world, which judges from appearances only. Jesus is in need of everything, and no one has compassion on Him. They do not so much as think on it. The moment they consider Him as the son of an artisan, they are not surprised to see Him destitute; such is His condition.

III. This poverty is entirely voluntary. The little infant whom I adore in the arms of His indigent Mother is He who has made all things. "By Him all things were made," to whom all things belong. *Mea sunt omnia.* If He willed it, the earth would put all its treasures at His feet; He need but say the word, and new worlds would spring into existence; everything, therefore,

was a matter of choice on His part. If, when He was born at Bethlehem, the royal family of David, from which He was descended, had lost both its former greatness and wealth; if His nativity coincided with a journey of His Mother; if, the inns of Bethlehem being all full, His parents were refused admittance into them, we must not imagine that these circumstances were due to hazard; they had all been determined in the eternal decrees, and as a consequence of His predilection for poverty.

Man, says St. Bernard, ignored the price of this virtue; but the Son of God, attracted by its charms, came down on earth, took it for His inheritance, that by His example He might teach us to love and esteem it. *Nesciebat homo pretium ejus; hanc itaque Dei Filius concupiscens, descendit ut eam eligat sibi, et nobis quoque sua aestimatione faciat pretiosam.* (Hom. 1, in vig. Nat. Dom.) What, then, has he seen to admire so much in this poverty, which man can not endure, and which they dread as a plague? Either Jesus Christ is mistaken, or the world is in error! (St. Bern.)

Second Point.—How the poverty of Jesus Christ in His nativity tends to save us. This was explained by the angel appearing to the shepherds, and inviting them to rejoice. "A Saviour is born to you; and this will be a sign unto you: you shall find an infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." A strange manner of announcing a Saviour! It is true, however, it is by these swaddling clothes, this gloomy dwelling, this manger, and, if I may say so, by all this wealth of poverty, that we have been saved. Covetousness, which draws in its train all the passions, which is the source of all crime, was the deadly sickness of which the human race was to be cured. There was need to encourage us to practise this detachment from transient earthly goods, which prepares the heart for the love of heavenly ones. We were to be taught to depend upon God alone, to expect everything from fidelity to His service, and to bury all solicitude in His bosom. Could this be effected by simply saying: "Woe to the rich; blessed are the poor!" Should we have relished this doctrine, had we not seen it confirmed by the example of God made man, an example very much more persuasive than mere words?

On the other hand, how could we resist a Saviour who says to us: "If there be in poverty the evil which you imagine to see in it; if there be in riches the happiness you seek in the possession of them, I should not have failed to see the one and the other. Is your judgment more infallible than Mine? The possession of wealth would have been free from danger for Me. My heart would not have clung to it. Earthly possessions would not have occupied My attention one moment, nor prevented Me from being employed

exclusively about the things which are My Father's; but I saw that they were full of danger for you, and in order to guard you against a desire for them, I kept them far from Me, and I pronounced fearful anathemas against those who love and eagerly strive to acquire them; and for this end also I promised true happiness to voluntary poverty, to detachment from all those frivolous goods. Compare what I have said with what I have done, and let My example explain My doctrine."

Do I really have the thoughts, do I have the affections of Jesus Christ in regard to poverty and riches?

I know well that He will be my Saviour, only inasmuch as He shall have been my model. Oh, my Lord! if, in consideration of the high degree of holiness to which Thou callest Thy ministers, Thou wouldst say to them all, as Thou saidst to the young man of the Gospel: "Wilt Thou be perfect, go sell all thou hast, give it to the poor, and follow Me," they ought not to hesitate to make the sacrifice, but Thou dost not ordinarily require of them such a sacrifice. Thou dost not demand of them to deprive themselves in reality of all that they possess, but to detach their hearts from them, and to be disposed to suffer all the incommodities and humiliations of indigence, if Thou permittest them to be reduced to it. However great their destitution may be, O Thou God of Bethlehem and of Calvary, it shall never compare with Thine; it shall ever be in proportion with the infinite reward which Thou promisest to those blessed poor who have left all things to follow Thee. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Poverty of Jesus Christ in the mystery of His nativity. First. It is extreme. His shelter a poor stable; poor swaddling clothes for his garments; a manger in lieu of a cradle. In this apparel does the Master of the world make His entrance into it when He comes to save men. Poverty will be His faithful companion in Egypt, at Nazareth, in the course of His preaching, and principally on Calvary. Second. It is accompanied with sufferings and humiliations. Jesus is poor, nay destitute, and no one expresses compassion for Him; they think he deserves not even a thought. Third. It is entirely voluntary. If He would say but one word, the earth would deposit all its treasures at His feet. What then has He seen in this poverty of which the world is in dread? Either Jesus Christ is deceived, or the world is in error.

Second Point.—The poverty of Jesus Christ in His nativity becomes conducive to our salvation. "A Saviour is born to you,

and this is the sign by which you will know Him." So it is in all truth; the stable, the manger, the swaddling clothes are the instruments of our salvation. Covetousness, which draws in its train all the passions, was the deadly sickness from which we were to be cured. Did it suffice to accomplish this object to say to men, "Woe to the rich"? We had need of the example of a God made man. This example is powerful indeed in its effects upon the heart of the man who meditates upon it! Do I have the thoughts, the affections of the Saviour in regard to poverty? *Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum coelorum.*

MEDITATION XXIV.

IN ENTERING THE ECCLESIASTICAL STATE BY RECEIVING THE TONSURE THE PRIEST MAKES A PROFESSION OF POVERTY.

1.—*The Church Requires Us to Make this Profession.*

2.—*Under what Circumstances Does She Require it?*

3.—*Her Wish is that We should ever Bear it in Mind.*

First Prelude.—Recall to mind this first ordination which opened the gates of the sanctuary for your entry. Whilst your hair was falling under the hands of the pontiff, you pronounced the words of the Fifteenth Psalm: *Dominus pars*, etc.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to understand well the spirit of this ceremony, and to be faithful to the profession of poverty which it contains.

First Point.—The Church demands of us the profession of poverty. It is true that the ecclesiastical state which we enter by receiving tonsure does not require of us the real effective poverty of the religious; but it requires an entire detachment from the goods of earth. Without this poverty of heart and affection, I should not be a disciple of the Saviour. How could I be His minister? "He that renounceth not all things which he possesseth, can not be My disciple." (Luc. xiv. 33.) When the Church permitted me to exchange the "ignominy of the secular habit" (Pontif.) for the glorious livery of Jesus Christ, she demanded to hear me proclaim aloud that I took the "Lord for the portion of my inheritance." (Ps. xv.) *Dominus pars hereditatis meae.* The holy Doctors have ever considered this declaration as a solemn profession of poverty. *Oportet ut qui Deum hereditate possident, absque nullo impedimento saeculi Deo servire studeant, et pauperes spiritu esse*

contendant, ut congrue illud Psalmistae dicere possint: Dominus pars hereditatis meae. (St. Is. Hisp. l. 12 de div. offic., c. 1.) There are, in fact, three things contained in this declaration:

I. I took the Lord for all my wealth, my only inheritance. I chose Him not as only a part of my inheritance; the Church would not have accepted on this condition. I promised to be contented with God, and, indeed, is he not too covetous who is not satisfied with the possession of this infinite good? If God be mine, what can there be wanting in me? Hence it is that as soon as I had made this public profession, before the bishop, they sang for me the beautiful canticle of David: "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof"; this was as much as saying: it is well for you to confide in God, and to be content with the portion which fell unto you, since the Lord, who is this portion, is the absolute Master of the universe. *Quid ultra quaerit, cui omnia suus conditor fit; aut quid ei sufficit, cui ipse non sufficit?* (St. Prosp. de Vit. Cont.) *Nonne possidetis omnia, si habetis eum qui omnia habet?* (Pet. Bles. Ser., xlii.) When, therefore, I said, *Dominus pars,* I promised to attach myself to God alone, and to remain a stranger to everything else. In the distribution of His goods God put on one side the riches of the earth, and this He appoints to be the portion of the lay world. "He gave the earth to the sons of men." Oh! but the inheritance of the priest is better by far. God says, "I am thy portion and thy inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel." (Num. xviii. 20.)

II. By this I also declared that I would entertain no affection for the goods of earth; for the poor man of God, says St. Augustine, is not the one who is indigent in the eyes of men, but he who is divested of all things in His heart. *Pauper siquidem Dei in animo est, non in sacculo.* The Church separates us from creatures and the solicitudes of life for the sole end that we may adhere to God alone. He desires us to be men of another world, men of a new generation, continually occupied in pleasing God, and procuring His glory. "This is the generation of those who seek the Lord."

III. The necessary consequence of this detachment is that I should neither covet the goods of earth which I possess not, nor be sorry to leave those which I do possess when the service of the Lord demands it, nor regret the loss of those which I no longer possess. Such is the agreement I made when I entered the clerical state. Alas! how many priests there are who seem not to have measured the extent of it nor kept the least token of its remembrance.

Second Point.—Under what circumstances did we make this profession of poverty? 1st. When we were aspiring to the

honor of entering the gates of the sanctuary, the Church laid down a condition. She did then go so far as to say: "The service of the altar can not be reconciled with the love of earthly things; make your choice, therefore; I am willing to admit you into the ranks of my ministers, but you must consent to separate from everything, at least in your heart, so that the Lord may be your sole possession." To this condition we subscribed, and we pronounced aloud the same formula: *Dominus pars hereditatis meae.* Let us beware lest we forget the act of renunciation we then made. *Non excidat a te quomodo . . . renuntiasti ignominiae laicali . . ; allibatus es verbis oris tui.* (Pet. Bles.)

2d. This engagement must be considered the more obligatory from the fact that it was reciprocal. We made a solemn promise to the Church; the Church also contracted an obligation toward us. She promised us that we would share in her rights, her immunities and privileges. *Filii carissimi, animadvertere debetis quod hodie de foro Ecclesiae facti estis et privilegia clericalia sortiti estis.* (Pont.) The agreement is not, therefore, a gratuitous one on our part; it is a binding contract, made between the Church and ourselves, and is obligatory on both parties.

3d Finally, we made this agreement before the altar, in presence of the pontiff who received it in the name of Jesus Christ, with the performing of ceremonies so holy that it is clothed with the character of things holy; so that if we violate it, we must at the same time violate fidelity, justice, and religion.

Third Point.—The desire of the Church is that we never lose sight of this agreement. She continually reminds us of it through the name she gives us, through the habit and crown which she requires us to wear.

I. The name *cleric*, according to the interpretation of St. Jerome and of the Church herself, signifies that the Lord chose us, and that we chose the Lord; that He is all ours, and that we are all His; neither of the two is true except as far as our heart is disengaged from terrestrial goods. However slight my love for riches may be, my heart shall be divided if I love them at all. I do not belong to God entirely, and I deserve not that God should be all to me.

II. The cassock which the Church commands us to wear is a symbol of death. By wearing this habit, so different from that of the laity, we declare that we are divested of the manners of the world, and of its cupidity; that we will not live its life any longer; that we know none, that we love none but God; and that in regard to the things of earth we are like a dead man in his grave.

III. The same should be said of the tonsure or clerical crown

which we are to renew from time to time. *Rasio capitis est temporalium omnium depositio.* (St. Hier.) *Caput radere significat cogitationes terrenas et superfluas a mente resecare. . . . Sicut pili non sunt pars corporis . . . sic bona temporalia non sunt nobis naturalia, sed superflua.* (St. Aug.) This crown teaches the priest that he should reign over himself, stand high above all the goods of earth, and be as little concerned about temporal losses as he is about the clipping of his hair.

O my God! have I always shown myself faithful to those sacred engagements? They received a new consecration each time that I performed some function about the altar, since the day of my first ordination. Can I receive them so frequently at the altar without freeing myself from all affection to earth? Come again, come, Thou, the supreme Good, the only Good which I desire, and, if enlightened by Thy divine presence, I discover the least attachment to things of earth, I will immediately sacrifice it to Thee.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—On the very day I received the tonsure I made a profession of poverty by declaring that the Lord would be the portion of my inheritance. *Dominus pars*, etc. Three things were contained in that declaration: I chose God to be the whole, not only a part of my inheritance. *Quid ultra quaerit cui omnia suus conditor fit?* I thereby bound myself to entertain no affection for the goods of earth. I must not, therefore, either seek those which I have not, nor be grieved in losing those which I have, or be covetous of those which I have not.

Second Point.—Circumstances which accompanied my profession. 1st. The Church willed that this profession should be a condition of my admission into the sanctuary. To this condition I have subscribed; the engagement is therefore perfect. 2d. This engagement was reciprocal. The Church has promised me that I would share in her rights, her immunities and privileges. I made this engagement in presence of the pontiff, who accepted it in the name of Jesus Christ.

Third Point.—The will of the Church is that we never lose sight of this engagement. 1st. The name *cleric* which she gives me recalls it continually to my mind. 2d. The habit which she orders me to wear is a symbol of death, and consequently signifies that I am divested of all things of earth. 3d. The same is symbolized by the tonsure, which I should renew from time to time. *Rasio capitis est temporalium omnium depositio.*

MEDITATION XXV.

THE SPIRIT OF POVERTY, RICH TREASURE OF THE GOOD PRIEST.

1.—*The Spirit of Poverty a Source of True Happiness for the Good Priest.*

2.—*A Source of Benedictions for His Labors.*

First Point.—The spirit of poverty a source of true happiness for the good priest. A Saviour who willed to be born and to live in the most extreme indigence had a right to begin the course of His preaching with the following words, which must have startled the world the first time that they were heard: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." This blessedness regards the temporal, the spiritual, the eternal life.

I. A blessedness for the temporal life. It means exemption from a thousand evils inseparable from the love of temporal goods, and the peace of mind which accompanies the spirit of poverty. What are the effects of riches amongst men? Continual solicitude, restless desires, endless projects, bitter regrets for want of success or in case of losses, and often despair after a total ruin. St. Lawrence Justinian describes in three words the torments of the covetous: *Ibi dolor, ibi labor, ibi pavor.* (Trac. x. de paup., c. 1.) Is this situation tolerable, especially for a man of the sanctuary, who has more need than another to possess his soul, so as to give himself entirely to the Almighty and to the discharge of His important function. He enjoys the sweetest peace; he relies on the care of Providence; he is the infant sleeping on the bosom of his mother. He has no desire, and he is in want of nothing; he has no solicitude except to love and serve the good Master, on whose care he fully relies. "Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you." (1 Pet. v. 7.) They who know not the secret of his happiness believe him to be sorrowful, and yet he is always rejoicing. They think him to be needy, and he enriches others; he seems not to possess anything, and he possesses all true goods. (2 Cor. vi. 10.) Do I desire to become like unto the senseless men of the world, or like unto the wise men of the Gospel? I clearly see on which side true happiness, nay, true temporal happiness, is to be found.

II. A blessing for our spiritual life. Spiritual life consists in an abundant participation in the favors of the Holy Ghost, in

the facility to commune with God, and enjoy the sweetness of this communion. Oh! how painful it is for me to be always distracted, cold in my meditations, in the celebration of the holy mysteries. How often have I envied the privilege of those priests ever recollected in the presence of God, never disturbed by anything in their conversation with God! When will it be given me to participate in their happiness and in the consolations they enjoy? When I shall be entirely freed from all affections for the things of this earth. The spirit of poverty, by divesting us of that which nourishes pride and sensuality, closes up the source of all our vices, and prepares our souls for all the virtues and for the reception of all heavenly favors.

The heart of man is never without desires; it aspires to heaven the moment it does not adhere to earth. As soon as it has renounced material gratifications it looks higher up for pleasures of another kind. It hungers and thirsts after spiritual enjoyments, and it shall be filled. The Lord does not even wait for the expression of our request. He has heard the preparation of our heart; our desire is our prayer. "The Lord hath heard the desires of the poor. Thy ear hath heard the preparation of their heart." (Ps. x. 17.)

Such is the affection of God toward those who are His poor. He gives Himself to them in exchange for all that they have left for His sake. This is what He has promised the apostles and all the priests who imitate their evangelical poverty. "He will receive an hundred-fold." (Matt. xix. 29.) For, what is this *hundred-fold*, St. Bernard asks, if not the adoption as children, the freedom of mind, the delights of charity, the glory of a good conscience, the kingdom of God within us, which is not eating and drinking, but justice itself, peace, and the joy of the Holy Ghost. The holy Doctor adds: *Annon centuplum habet omnium, qui impletur spiritu sancto, qui Christum habet in pectore?* I shall, therefore, be united to God; I shall enjoy and possess Him in this very life, in the same proportion that I shall have disengaged my heart from everything which is not God. Alas, how many pleasures I deprive myself of because of the earthly affections which occupy my heart! *Praeoccupatum desideriis saecularibus animum delectatio sancta declinat; nec misceri poterunt vera vanis, aeterna caducis, ut pariter sapias quae super coelos sunt et quae super terram.* (St. Bern. ser. vi. de ascens.) *Projice sarcinam saeculi: nudus et levis ad coelum evola: alas virtutum tuarum auri deprimunt onera.* (St. Hier. ep. ad Exuperum.)

III. A blessing for eternal life. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Interpreters failed not to notice the manner in which

Our Lord expresses Himself in this passage. In speaking of other beatitudes He had said: They who weep *shall* be comforted, they who hunger *shall* be filled, etc. In speaking of spiritual poverty He does not say that they who embrace it *shall* have the kingdom of heaven; they have it already, they possess it by anticipation, they have acquired the right to enter it. Blessed poor they are, St. Augustine exclaims: they purchase heaven with their poverty itself. *Felicitas magna christianorum, quibus datum est ut paupertatem faciant pretium regni Coelorum. Non tibi displiceat paupertas tua; nihil ea potest ditius inveniri. Vis nosse quam locuples sit? Coelum emit.* (Serm. xxviii. de verb. apos.) If, therefore, I am willing, by means of some few miserable goods from which I shall withdraw my affections, I shall be king for eternity, in a kingdom where I shall find glory, delights, treasures, everything in abundance. O my God, how weak my faith must be if I hesitate to make this exchange!

Second Point.—The spirit of poverty a source of benediction for the labors of the good priest. In this greedy, calculating age of ours, when men rush on in pursuit of wealth, hardly knowing any other code than that of material interest, nothing but the well-known disinterestedness of the clergy can remedy this evil and overcome that low tendency. The greater the greed of men for gold, the more do they admire those who have the courage to despise it. This is it that exalts the ministry of the priest, which gives it that noble independence, which permits us to attack vice wherever it exists, not sparing the great any more than the lowly.

How powerful the priest is when he can say, like St. Basil, to those who threaten him, "If you rob me of what I possess, you will injure the poor more than you will myself; if you send me into exile, you will not banish me out of the domain of God; for the whole earth is His, and my country is co-extensive with His domain." This it is that attracts the esteem and affection of people; nothing impresses them so much as the sight of a priest who, besides his cares, his long vigils, his health, sacrifices moreover in their interest all his worldly goods. They have a religion and priesthood which thus helps the unfortunate. St. Paul considered his disinterestedness as one of the principal causes of the success of his labors. (2 Cor. xi. 9.) St. Bernard applies to the good priest the following words of the Son of God: "If I shall be raised from the earth I shall draw all things to Me." When a pastor stands elevated above this terrestrial cupidity, he draws to him all hearts. His parishioners know him to be a man whose sole desire is to make them happy and to save their souls, and they

nearly always in the end yield to his admonitions and to the strength of his examples.

Repeat the form of your first consecration to the service of God: *Dominus pars;* or say to Him, in the language of a pious and learned priest, "*Tu, Domine, es pelagus bonorum omnium, unicusque animae meae thesaurus. Excute a me pondus omnium terrenorum desiders iorum, ut igne amoris tui solius ardeam. Tu solus me afficias, solulactifices. . . . Posside mentem meam o summum et incommutabile bonum! posside eam, ut ipsa possideat te.*" (Cor. a Lapid. in Math., c. 5.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The spirit of poverty a source of true happiness for the priest. First. Temporal happiness, exemption from a thousand evils which love of earthly goods draws in its train. *Ibi dolor, ibi labor, ibi pavor.* Sweet peace to him who relies entirely upon the care of Providence. As he desires nothing, he is in want of nothing. Second. Spiritual happiness, abundant participation in the favors of the Holy Ghost. God gives Himself to those who have given up all things for His sake, precious "one hundred-fold!" Third. Eternal happiness! "Of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Second Point.—A source of blessings on the labors of the good priest. The greater the greed of men for gold the greater the admiration for those who desire it. Remember the example of St. Paul. "*Si exaltatus fuero a terra, omnia traham ad me ipsum.*"

MEDITATION XXVI.

CIRCUMCISION OF JESUS CHRIST. MORTIFICATION.

1.—*What should We Think of Exterior Mortification?*
2.—*Who are Those it Concerns?*

In all His mysteries, Our Lord Jesus Christ fights and teaches us to fight against the three-fold concupiscence which furnishes so many slaves to the devil and so many victims to hell. To pride and covetousness He opposes the love of abjection and of poverty, as is particularly seen in His incarnation and nativity; to the unbridled desire of sensual pleasures He opposes the love of sufferings, as He hastens to manifest in the mystery of His circumcision. He was in no way bound by this law, and we must believe that by submitting to it His principal intention was to suffer. His volun-

tary martyrdom begins in the womb of Mary—it will end on the cross; and in all circumstances He will offer us the most perfect model of mortification.

This virtue regulates both the desires of the soul and the use of our senses. We call it *interior* mortification when it regulates the operations of our soul, and *exterior* mortification when it applies itself to regulate the use of our senses. We shall speak of *exterior* mortification only; and this is divided into two kinds: *negative* mortification, which simply refuses the body some gratification; and *positive* mortification, which causes the body to endure some sufferings. Let us form a just idea of exterior mortification confined within prudent bonds, and we shall know who they are whom it concerns, and what we should think of a Christian, and particularly of a priest, who dispenses himself from its practice, or speaks of it in a slighting manner though he does not condemn it.

First Point.—What should we think of exterior mortification confined within prudent limits? It consists in striving against nature without destroying it, in respecting its claims without flattering its inclinations. Nature is an enemy both necessary and dangerous. We are forbidden to accede to its demands, we are forbidden to destroy it. In this matter, therefore, discretion is a duty still more necessary than in the case of other virtues, for when we say that perfect mortification must destroy nature, we mean that it should subdue it, and place it, in regard to grace, in about the same dependence that a dead body is with regard to those who dispose of it as they see fit. A mortified man, however, should not be deprived of sentiment; far from it. It is, on the contrary, from sentiment subdued by mortification that he derives all his merit before God. There is, therefore, need of wisdom in this matter. Mortification will reform that which liberty, led astray by passion, has corrupted in human nature, which is the work of God.

I may, therefore, nay, I must, listen to nature in its lawful demands and needs for its preservation, provided that I refer that which I give it, not to its gratification, but solely to the will of the Lord. In this way, although ever at war with myself, I shall have equal merit, both in governing and in sparing my most dangerous enemy, which is none other but my own self. Thou shalt grant me a like reward both when for the love of Thee I shall mortify myself, and when for the love of Thee I shall forego mortification. When we do the will of God through a pure desire of pleasing Him every action becomes meritorious.

Second Point.—Who are they whom exterior mortification concerns? When confined within the prudent limits just men-

tioned, this virtue is evidently obligatory for all Christians, but especially for the priest.

I. It was only after declaring that we would follow the Gospel that we were admitted by Baptism into the fold of Jesus Christ. The whole Christian doctrine tends to establish the dominion of the spirit over the flesh. This great principle is continually laid down in the epistles of St. Paul. "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh, with its vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v. 24.) "If you live according to the flesh you shall die, but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." (Rom. viii. 13.) "Mortify your members therefore." (Col. iii. 5.) We have, moreover, promised to imitate the Saviour, our essential model. And He is represented as the God incarnate doing penance for us, thus consecrating in His person the holy exercises of exterior mortification. Eight days after His nativity behold Him offering His Father His blood in the ceremony of circumcision. We shall see Him during His Passion giving up His adorable face to buffets and spittle, His head to thorns, His body to flagellation and blows. His whole life was a long, continuous, painful sacrifice.

Full of the same spirit as their divine Master, the saints were ingenious in procuring sufferings for themselves. Hatred of themselves was, as it were, one of their first instincts, one which may be said was common to all of them. They who had led the most pure lives were the foremost in self-mortification. Recall to mind the austerities of the Precursor, of St. Catharine of Siena, of St. Louis Gonzaga, and of a thousand others. Who will dare condemn what the Church has honored and praised, and the Saviour has so highly commended by His example?

It is certain that exterior mortification atones for sins; and all of us have sins to expiate. It is certain that it keeps the flesh submissive to the spirit, and represses its revolts; and we all know that the flesh is the most annoying and dangerous of all our enemies. Mortification draws down preservative graces; and we certainly all need them. It is a preparation for the reception of celestial guidance and for the fruition of the delights of piety; exterior mortification imparts practical faith, love for God, and a love for heavenly things, and what other graces should we ask for ourselves if we possess this virtue? It is so extremely desirable that we should pray for it most ardently.

II. To these motives, which concern every Christian, we shall add others which make mortification more strictly obligatory on the priest. Jesus Christ every day sacrifices Himself through His ministers; the priest should unite himself every day with the

sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and offer himself up for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Let us suppose that the priest has never committed actual sin; he, like his Saviour, is a penitent for the people, chosen to appease the anger of God aroused against so many obdurate sinners, who seem blindly to persevere in provoking His wrath. This mortification, according to St. Paul, will "fill up those things that are wanting of the sufferings of Christ," and will give prosperity to His ministry.

Deign to pay attention to the fact, and you will notice that all the men whom God employed to work out wonderful things for the salvation of nations were men mortified, even possibly to excess; and this should at least astonish us, even if we do not see fit to imitate them. Consider how Saints, such as Dominic, Vincent Ferrer, Francis Xavier, Alphonsus Liguori, laid the foundations of the success of their apostolic labors. They imposed upon themselves more penances than they required of others. Their austerities were a prayer which moved the heart of God and induced Him to take pity on sinners. They were an instruction and example which acted powerfully on the sinners themselves.

It remains for me, O my God, to regulate by prudence and counsel the practice of a virtue of which I acknowledge the importance and necessity. Sustain me in the constant practice of mortification, and teach me its prudent use; and in this manner Thou shalt pour down abundant blessings upon myself and upon my labors.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What must I think of exterior mortification confined within proper limits? It consists in fighting against human nature without destroying it, in respecting its claims without flattering its inclinations. I am equally forbidden to leave it in peace, or eradicate it completely. I may, nay, I must, listen to human nature in what it demands for its preservation; provided that I refer what I allow it, not to its own gratification, but solely to the will of the Lord. I will deserve a reward when for God's sake I mortify myself, and when for the same motive I acquiesce to its demands. Everything is pleasing to God when we do His will from a pure and sincere motive.

Second Point.—Who are they whom exterior mortification concerns? All Christians, but the priest in particular. We become Christians only by solemnly promising to follow the Gospel, but all the doctrines of the Gospel aim at the establishment of the dominion of the spirit over the flesh. The imitation of Jesus

Christ is essential for the Christian; and all the life of Christ was continual mortification. Such were the sentiments of the saints. A desire to suffer was apparently one of their first instincts, and one which was common to all of them. It suffices to know the effects of exterior mortification, to understand that no one should exempt himself from its practice. This virtue is much more necessary to the priest, who ought to imitate Jesus Christ more perfectly, to be like Him a public penitent, to co-operate with Him in the work of redemption, and thereby to fill in his flesh that which is wanting of the sufferings of the Saviour.

MEDITATION XXVII.

PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE. HOW WE SHOULD BE GENEROUS IN THE SACRIFICES WHICH GOD DEMANDS OF US.

1.—*Sacrifices which Jesus Inspires Mary to Make.*
2.—*Sacrifices which Jesus Imposes on Himself.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the temple of Jerusalem, Mary in the vestibule fulfilling the law of the purification. Behold her next on her knees before the altar, offering her Son to God and redeeming Him. Jesus directs everything, and offers Himself to His Father through the hands of His Mother.

Second Prelude.—Enlighten me, O Lord, concerning the perfect dispositions with which things apparently so common are accomplished. Grant that I may participate in the admirable generosity of which I find so many examples in this mystery.

First Point.—Sacrifices which Jesus inspires Mary to make. She appreciated her virginity more than the honor of becoming the Mother of God, as was proved by her question to the angel. However, she had no ambition to be known and esteemed as virgin. She readily sacrifices this privilege, and her humility, preferring to it the honor of imitating Jesus. We therefore see her living and associating with the women of Israel. She waits at the gate of the temple for the appointed time for her purification with other mothers, though she was purer than the sun; she had, however, a striking example under her very eyes; the Almighty concealed under the appearance of a weak infant. God, thrice holy, annihilated so far as to take upon Himself the appearance of sinners. How could Mary, then, refuse the humiliation connected with a legal uncleanness which she had not contracted? *Esto inter mulieres*

tanquam una earum; nam et filius tuus sic est in numero peccatorum. (St. Bern. Ser. iii. De Purif.)

This sacrifice is the least, however, of those which Mary offers on that day. She sacrifices her Son, and, by offering this victim so dear to her heart, she sacrifices more than her own self. She does not ignore that, in offering Him to God in order to atone for the iniquities of the world, she is offering Him up to insults and to death. She was well acquainted with the prophets, and had read them in advance. She had learned the details of the sufferings of the Messiah. She now hears Simeon declaring that the Saviour of all men will not, alas! save the whole of them; that even in Israel many will not profit by the merits, however ample, of the redemption; that, far from attracting all to Him by His divine qualities, He shall be a "sign which shall be contradicted"; that He shall be despised, persecuted, put to death by a people whom He tenderly loves. "And thine own soul," Simeon added, "a sword [of sorrow] shall pierce." She hears all the predictions, and submits willingly to her lot. She accepts all. She repeats after one of her illustrious ancestors, Willest Thou it, O Lord? My heart is ready. "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready." (Ps. lvi. 8.) She even now says what her Son will say in a few years, "Not My will, but Thine be done." (Luc. xxii. 42.) I also say the same sometimes, O my God, but when the cup of grief is not removed, when I have to drink it, how faint I find my will to be! Jesus born to suffer, and to save men by His sufferings, presents His cross to all His disciples. From those who are most dear to Him He demands heavier sacrifices. And I complain when He associates me with those whom He loves most tenderly.

Second Point.—Sacrifices which Jesus Christ imposes upon Himself. Let us study this mystery of the *presentation*, and examine the secrets of the heart of the Son of God. The offering which He made of Himself to His Father was not in His case a mere ceremony, as it was for other children. He fully realized that, as the Redeemer, in offering Himself to God He placed Himself in the hands of His justice, and resigned Himself to a death whose agony and ignominy would be excessive. He hears what Simeon says to Mary, and His knowledge surpasses infinitely that of the prophet; all the details of His Passion are present to His mind; He clearly understands the extent of the obligation of the Redeemer, and He willingly signs the sacred contract. From the first moment of His entrance in the world He had made an offering of Himself to His Father. "Holocausts for sins were not pleasing to Thee, then I said, behold I come." (Heb. x. 6, 7.) This self-obligation He solemnly renews in the mystery of His

presentation. From the Temple His mind wings its flight to Calvary; and then anxiously awaits the hour of His sacrifice. Is this my disposition? When there was question of saving me, nothing could restrain Christ's generosity; and when there is question of serving Him, I am swerved from my purpose by merest trifles. The ardent charity which filled Christ's heart, and the absence of that sacred fire from my own, afford an explanation of His devotedness and of my indifference. The contrast is certainly strange. Thou hast no need of me, O my Lord, and yet Thou gives me everything. I can not exist a moment without Thy assistance, and yet sometimes I am unwilling to yield anything in return. The tears of Thy infancy, the labors of Thy youth, the annoyances of Thy public life, the sufferings and contumelies of Thy death, all were endured for me. What more can be said? Such has been the excess of Thy love for an ungrateful being that Thou hast resigned Thyself to a sort of perpetual Passion for his sake. In the institution of the holy sacrifice of the altar, in my vocation to Thy priesthood, Thou didst plainly foresee all the trials, abuses, and possible sacrilegious treatment Thou wouldst be exposed to in Thy design to save me; and yet Thy love triumphed over that strong repugnance, causing an agony prolonged through ages. And yet I dread a sacrifice of only momentary duration and whose real extent may be exaggerated by my imagination. Thou didst make Thyself my victim; and I refuse to be Thine. Oh, Lord! I am afraid Thou wilt cease to love me if I do not begin to love Thee so sincerely as to be induced to suffer, with patience at least, the trials and afflictions so much sought after by some of Thy faithful followers.

I will unite myself intimately with that sacrifice so satisfactory and perfect which Jesus Christ makes of Himself every day through the ministry of His priests; I will ask through the merits of this sacrifice that my own offering, the one I am about to make to Him at the holy altar, may finally satisfy His desires. Henceforth, O my Lord, I will yield everything to Thee. Mary and Joseph, be you the witnesses and guarantees of my promise. I will prepare my heart to willingly overcome the first repugnances I will experience in the accomplishment of my duties.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Sacrifices which Jesus inspires Mary to make. To the glory of being known as a virgin, she prefers the glory of imitating Jesus in His abasement. She beholds the holiest of all beings, God Himself, apparently laying aside the Godhead to

assume the appearance of a sinner. How could Mary refuse the humiliation of legal uncleanness, which she had not contracted? She sacrifices her Son. Yet she well knew that by this offering made for the restoration of God's glory she was exposing Him to contumelies and to death. She was quite well acquainted with the prophecies; she understood the meaning of the painful prediction, "He shall be contradicted," and of the other also, "Thine own soul a sword shall pierce." And yet I complain when this same Saviour sends me a trifling share of His sufferings, and makes me a companion of those who are most dear to His heart.

Second Point.—Sacrifices which Jesus imposes on Himself. He knows that in His quality of Redeemer He must resign Himself to God's will. He surrenders Himself to His justice, and submits to the most dreadful of all deaths. He weighs well His responsibility, and is willing to assume it. He would not leave anything undone when the salvation of my soul is at stake. I allow myself to be deterred by every trifling consideration when there is question of serving my God. O Jesus, Thou didst make Thyself my victim, and I refuse to be Thine! I will at least endure with patience the sufferings which Thy faithful servants seek after so eagerly.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE. FIDELITY IN ACCOMPLISHING ALL THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW.

1.—*How Unimportant soever these Requirements may Appear.*
2.—*However Slight these Obligations seem to be.*

First Point.—Fidelity to observe all the laws of the Lord how unimportant soever they may appear to be. Mary, Joseph, and Jesus who inspires them, perform all the ceremonies which were prescribed, and this obedience unfolds the secrets of this mystery. The time, the manner, all the circumstances, either those concerning purification of the Mother, or those pertaining to the presentation or redemption of the infant God—nothing is omitted, nothing is changed, everything is done "according to the laws of Moses." "As it is written in the law of the Lord"—"As it is said in the law of the Lord." (Luc. ii.) Through the course of His life, Jesus will show the same fidelity to carry out the ordinances of His Father. When He went every year with His parents to the Temple;

when He ate the Paschal lamb, it was always at the time and in the manner which God had prescribed through Moses. He accomplished the law to *an iota*, to "a tittle." (Matt. v. 18.) He practises what He teaches; He fulfils the essential part of the laws, and does not neglect the minute one. Consider the motives which urge us to adopt His line of action.

I. God's commands are never trifles. When God wills anything it immediately becomes an obligation. That which before would have escaped my attention now deserves my reverence; the authority of God eliminates, does away with every pretext for freedom of action.

II. Anything which pleases God multiplies my claims to heavenly rewards, and causes me to advance in perfection. I must consider all laws and their details as great, important, and worthy of all my attention; under this head can be counted ordinary regulations. God considers the principle more than the action, the heart more than the hand. When I endeavor to accomplish the will of God fully, with a sincere desire of pleasing Him, He turns toward me eyes full of complacency, and I increase the treasure of my merits. When I have pleased the Almighty, received an increase of grace for time and of glory for eternity, I have performed an action which can not be looked upon with indifference. Men become saints, not by doing extraordinary works, but rather by fidelity in doing well what God requires.

III. If there are trifling matters which require my observance, I can make them great through my Saviour. A generous soul, by carefully obeying the most trifling injunctions, seems to say to God, Speak, O Lord, and test my disposition to perform what is most difficult as readily as that which is easy; in everything I seek Thy will and pleasure only.

IV. The occasions of performing extraordinary things are rare; those of keeping small observances are frequent, and continual vigilance and fidelity manifest an unusual spirit of self-sacrifice, a remarkable strength of will. All men are capable of making a momentary effort. He, however, who during his whole life, from morning till night, submits without a murmur to a long series of vexations, who is always modest and thoughtful of God's presence, punctual in following a certain line of conduct, displays perseverance akin to heroism. *Minimum quidem minimum est, sed in minimis fidelem esse, maximum.* Let us give an example: the holy practice of particular examination seems to be quite trifling, yet every priest observed it for some time, at least in the seminary or during retreats. Are they many who practise it constantly?

V. Trifling matters are the guardians of those of more importance. Light faults lead the way to sad falls. We should believe the oracle of the Holy Ghost. "He that contemneth little things shall fall by little and little." (Ecclus. xix. 1.) A daily proof of this point we find in the exercise of the ministry; we discover it also in ourselves. If we sincerely questioned our tepid, drooping, and almost hardened soul, why it fell into that state, we should very soon receive the answer: "He that is unjust in that which is little, is unjust also in that which is greater." (Luc. xvi. 10.) On the contrary, we never hear of a priest who is faithful in obeying minor precepts and does not also accomplish his more important duties. "He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in that which is greater."

VI. No one belittles himself by walking in the footsteps of God. Jesus Christ had good reasons for His conduct in this matter; it is enough for me to imitate Him. Through love and respect for Him and His example, I will obey all regulations however unimportant they may appear.

Second Point.—Fidelity to observe the laws however slightly they may bind us. By giving birth to her divine Son, Mary did not impair her virginity, but lent to it a transcendent sanctity; she was not therefore bound by the law for purification of other women; much less was Our Lord bound to obey the law of the circumcision, and all the laws concerning the presentation in the Temple. The mere desire of His Father was law to Him, and Mary's sovereign rule was to imitate her divine Son. They did not use any vague interpretation, excuse, or dispensation. The letter of the law expressed a command, the Son and the Mother obey. What would become of us if Jesus Christ had restricted Himself to mere obligations in the matter of our salvation. What, at this very moment, would become of us, were He to bestow on us no graces except those we call necessary graces? Must I not fear that He will give me none but ordinary graces, if He sees me too anxious to escape the obligations imposed by the laws of God? It were a thousand times better to tighten the bonds which unite me to Him than to loosen them. That man is a slave who will obey only when compelled or threatened; and the slave deserves not to be treated with the kindness and liberality used toward children. If the law is favorable to my liberty, I rejoice thereat; I shall be better able to show the sentiments of my heart. God looks down on me; He is pleased to see me loyal to duty when His eye is my only witness. This suffices. I desired the occasion of manifesting to Him my love; it has come, and I will not allow it to escape.

O Lord, shall I never serve thee for Thyself, and for Thyself alone?

It is true that my interest can not be separated from Thine, and that whatever contributes to my happiness contributes also to Thy glory. I have everything to hope from a Father who seeks only opportunities to benefit me, and who has already granted me so many favors, although He had many reasons to use His justice against me. But since Thou bestowest Thy love so gratuitously on a poor creature, who deserves naught but Thy pity, nay, even contempt, an ungrateful sinner who has no claim on Thy clemency, it is only proper that I should forget myself entirely, in order to please Thee, my God.

Determine with yourself in which matter, and in what particular circumstances, you will on this day give almighty God that proof of your love. Fix upon certain moments of the day at which you will ask yourself an account of the small sacrifices you shall have already made for God.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Observe all the prescriptions of the laws of God however unimportant they may seem. Jesus, Mary, Joseph obey everything that is prescribed; and this obedience constitutes the essence of the mystery of the presentation. Nothing is changed, nothing is omitted, all is done according to the law. Jesus will ever show the same punctuality in the accomplishment of His Father's will. Nothing is small when God commands it. Everything is important that pleases God, hastens my progress to perfection, multiplies my claims to heavenly rewards. We enhance small things by fervor in their accomplishment. The occasions of doing extraordinary things are rare; we can continually perform small things, and this perseverance in vigilance and self-sacrifice demands an uncommon strength of mind. Small virtues are the guardians of the great ones. We are never lost sight of when we walk in the steps of God.

Second Point.—Observe all the prescriptions of the law however slightly they may seem to bind. Mary was not bound by the law of purification; neither was Jesus by those of the circumcision and of the presentation. The will of His Father was the only law of the Saviour; and with regard to Mary, her law was to imitate her Son. What would have become of us, had Jesus Christ limited Himself to a strict obligation in our case? What? O Lord! shall I never serve Thee for Thine own sake, and solely for Thine own sake?

MEDITATION XXIX.

PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE TEMPLE. CONDUCT OF THE GOOD PRIEST CONCERNING RUBRICS AND LITURGICAL CEREMONIES.

1.—*He Respects Them.*
2.—*He Observes Them.*
3.—*He Explains Them.*

First Point.—The good priest professes sincere respect for ecclesiastical ceremonies; for, he says, we can not respect too much that which is holy in the sight of God Himself. Almighty God, with His own mouth, dictated the ceremonies of the former worship. Can we recollect without astonishment into what details He condescended to enter, and what expressions He used, when prescribing those complex rites, which we might call insignificant had they not been established by sovereign wisdom? "Hear, Israel, I, thy Lord, thy God, speak." And after thus admonishing His people, He repeats that He is not giving counsels, but imposing laws. "Forget it not, thou privileged nation, thy fidelity in this matter shall be rewarded by abundant benedictions, as also thy negligence would draw down upon thee terrible calamities." (Deut. *passim.*)

Nadab, Abiu, and Oza acted contrary to the ceremonial in points which appear unimportant and under circumstances which seem to excuse them, and yet they are punished with a death so terrible that all Israel was stricken with awe. God is ever the same. "I am the Lord, and I change not." (Mal. iii. 6.) This should be a reason of fear to priests who perform ceremonies with much levity, and do not so much as take the trouble to learn them. Yet the ceremonies of the Old Law were not as sacred as ours. They did not relate to mysteries as holy as those of the New Law.

The Church considers ceremonies as something so important that she uses in prescribing them the infallible light and the sovereign authority she has received from the Lord. In the administration of the Sacraments, in the sacrifice of the Mass, in public invocation, and in all that relates to divine worship, she leaves nothing to option; she regulates everything with a care which shows that in her opinion those observances deserve a great respect. Reflect on one of the decrees that she enacted in the holy Council of Trent: "*Si quis dixerit receptos et approbatos Ecclesiae catholicae ritus, in solemni sacramentorum administratione adhiberi consuetos,*

aut contemni, aut sine peccato a ministris pro libitu omitti, aut in novos alios per quemcumque Ecclesiarum pastorem mutari posse anathema sit." (Conc. Trid. sess. vii. can. xiii.)

The anathema or excommunication is the severest punishment that the Church can inflict. Whom does she anathematize in this place? She excommunicates not only those who change, contemn, or neglect, according to their fancy, the rites which she has adopted and approved; but she punishes those who merely say that each pastor may change, despise, or omit them without sin. If the Church treats with so much rigor those even who say that it can be done, will she spare the priests who are guilty of the transgression itself? They object that such or such is an unimportant ceremony, that its observance is inconvenient; that there can be no great harm in its omission, provided there be no contempt. This is a deplorable blindness. To despise ceremonies is a serious evil; to omit them is another, which the Council distinguishes from the first. The Church launches her anathema against any man who says that they can be *contemned*, and also against any man who says that they can be omitted or changed.

Second Point.—The good priest observes the rubrics. Who is he, asks the Wise Man, who shall be regarded as perfectly just before the Lord? He answers: He who is not satisfied in doing good, but who does it with all possible perfection. The observance of the sacred rites should have two qualities, punctuality and devotion.

I. Punctuality consists in observing all the ceremonies at the time and in the manner prescribed. Let us not omit any of them, since they are all positive commands. We have no right to divide our obedience. Let us aim at deserving the praise bestowed by St. Jerome on Nepotian: *In omnes caerimonias pia sollicitudo disposita, non minus, non majus negligebat officium.* (Ad. Heliod.) Let us also observe the time and manner, which are as equally prescribed as the ceremonies themselves. If, through precipitation or unnecessary slowness, ceremonies cease to be in harmony with the words to which they relate, they become a misnomer; there is no connection between the words and actions, nor with the object for which they have been instituted. This is a matter of deepest importance. Let us perform the ceremonies at the moment and also in the manner prescribed; not making the inclination slight when it ought to be profound, nor profound when it ought to be slight.

II. That, however, which gives life to all those exterior forms is devotion. If we are careful to enliven these exterior forms by faith, we shall adore God in spirit and in faith. We will please

Him, says St. Cyprian, by the movements of the body, the tone of our voice; for everything will then be done through obedience and love. *Placendum est divinis oculis, et habitu corporis, et modo vocis.* (De orat. Dom.) We should therefore grasp fully the sense of the ceremonies, that they may be nothing more than the expression of our sentiments. For this purpose we ought to understand well their meaning; the more so that they are a part of the instruction that we must give to the people.

Third Point.—The good priest explains the ceremonies. In instituting the sacred ceremonies, the Church intended to procure primarily the glory of her adorable spouse, and also the edification of her ministers and of the faithful. The sacred rites are for the priest a continual exhortation to a deeper religious feeling, and to a fervor which his sublime functions require of him. How useful, also, they would become to the laity if it were initiated in the knowledge of our admirable liturgy. They would therein behold our dogmas pictured, symbolized, placed within the reach of all intelligences. "Everything belongs to the Church," says Bossuet, "and everything speaks to touch the heart and to enlighten the mind." What more interesting, for instance, than the meaning of the ceremonies of Baptism? If the people were taught by a series of instructions the meaning of the rites of Mass, they certainly would become well versed in their religion, of which the holy sacrifice is the pivot. When they have under their eyes the spectacle of a function rightly performed; when they witness the gravity, recollected piety of a priest at the altar; when on greater solemnities they consider the imposing order, the rich vestments, the whole clergy wrapped in reverence before the majesty of the Lord, they must necessarily raise their thoughts from visible things to invisible realities. How amazingly would their piety be increased if they fully understood the meaning of all the ceremonies?

The Council of Trent obliges pastors to explain the liturgy. (Sess. xxii. Can. 3.) Do we always fulfil this obligation with that obedience which the Church expects of her ministers? If, through want of instruction, the lay people know nothing of our ceremonies, we need not wonder at the weariness they experience when witnessing the pomp of our most touching religious functions.

Have I had for rubrics and ceremonies the respect due to the divine authority whence they emanate, and to the ends which God had in view in prescribing them? Have I manifested this respect by my application to study, my exactness in observing, and my zeal in explaining them? Have I utilized them as a food to my piety, and a means of *inflaming the hearts of the faithful with the*

fire of devotion? How shameful it is if I am ignorant of what I am bound to teach. I will repair my negligence, appease just remorse, and put to better use a means so apt to promote the glory of God, my sanctification, and the salvation of my brethren.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest professes deep respect for ecclesiastical ceremonies. We can not respect too much that which is great in the estimation of God. He Himself prescribed the ceremonies of the Old Law; He punished with awful severity the slightest violations of those laws. The Church considers ceremonies as something most important. Remember her decree: *Si quis dixerit...* The anathema is the severest penalty that she can inflict. Consider against whom she pronounces this sentence.

Second Point.—The good priest observes the rubrics. With punctuality, with devotion. He observes them all, at the proper time, in the proper manner. That which enlivens exterior worship is devotion. We should, therefore, fully understand the ceremonies and be well acquainted with their signification.

Third Point.—He explains the ceremonies. Priests find in ceremonies a continual exhortation to a deep religious feeling, and to the fervor which those holy functions require of them; in them the faithful find our dogmas, as it were, pictured, placed within reach of them. The Council of Trent commands the pastors to explain the liturgy. Have I made proper use of a means so useful to procure the glory of God, my sanctification, and the salvation of my brethren?

MEDITATION XXX.

FLIGHT INTO EGYPT. MODEL OF UNRESERVED CONFIDENCE IN PROVIDENCE.

1.—*In the Departure.*
2.—*The Sojourn in Egypt.*
3.—*The Return to Nazareth.*

Our Saviour in the mysteries of His divine infancy did not seem to act as a supernatural being; everything seemed to be directed by Joseph, the head of the family; Jesus, however, secretly governed his mind, taught him interiorly what he had to do, and guided him in everything.

First Point.—Departure of the holy family for Egypt. In using the jurisdiction granted to them, our superiors may see fit to move us from one place to another; we expect that they will treat us with gentleness, and respect our feelings. God seems to have no such considerations for His Son. "The angel of the Lord appears in sleep to Joseph, and says to him: Arise, take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt and be there until I shall tell thee." (Matt. ii. 13.)

Never was there a command more extraordinary, nor more difficult of execution. Joseph must leave a country where in his poor situation, he could find some help among his relatives and acquaintances; now he must go into Egypt, a country of which he knows not the language, and separated from Jerusalem by deserts; he must live among a people unfriendly to the Jews, and steeped in idolatry; this long journey must be made in the middle of winter, along roads unknown, cut up by torrents, and affording no security to travelers. Then, the Mother was so delicate, and the Child so young! He must start in the middle of the night, immediately, without even the provisions necessary for such a long journey.

This command implied many things which seemed at variance with the light of human reason. Why should they go so far and start so suddenly? Could not God's sovereign wisdom secure in some other manner the life of an Infant so precious? Would they not expose Him to imminent danger by undertaking this long voyage in the season of winter, and in the present destitution of the holy family? If they must leave Bethlehem, why should they go to Egypt, and not rather to the country of the Wise Men? Why had not the command been given earlier, or at least one day in advance? Joseph utters not one word of complaint, delays not one moment. His unreserved confidence shall be justified. Forgetting itself, the holy family thought only of obeying God's will. God is thoughtful—He provides everything. The journey is safely accomplished. The holy family arrives at its destination.

Ah, how completely does this example censure my anxieties, my complaints, and perhaps my outspoken murmurs, when my superiors assign me to a position repugnant to my inclination! Do not I know that God wishes to try my faith, that many graces are attached to this trial; that of all positions in the world, the best one for me is that which God selects for me? The commands of God made known to us are sacred; and we should fear nothing so much as to depart from their complete fulfilment. Woe to the priest who will accept no mission except one that will suit his own fancy. He will not enjoy God's blessing. How consoling, on the other hand, to be able to say to one's self: I have done what the

Lord commanded me to do; I have a right to depend on His promises. "The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing; He hath set me in a place of pasture . . . though I should walk in the midst of the shadow of death, I fear no evils, for Thou art with me." (Ps. xxii.) Let us go wherever God calls us; let us remain there till He will command us.

Second Point.—Sojourn of the holy family in Egypt. The angels had said to Joseph, "Be there until I shall tell thee." He waits patiently, does not so much as ask once to return to his native country. The lonesomeness of a strange land, the difference of customs, and the prolonged exile cause him many a suffering. He will not, however, entertain the thought of leaving Egypt. He came in obedience to God; He will not return except by His supreme command. He actually remained seven years in this country, ever resigned and ever relying wholly on Providence. This fidelity is certainly most admirable. But it is seldom found among men. At first we make a sacrifice with tolerable good grace. Shortly after, however, we grow weary and uneasy; and cease to turn to God for strength to do His holy will.

The desire of a change oftentimes troubles excellent priests, who do not suspect the danger of this temptation. *Imaginatio locorum et mutatio multos fefellit.* (Imit. l. 1, c. ix.) They always imagine they will be happier in another place. They continue to exaggerate the inconveniences of their present situation, and they fail to see any in the position they seek. This is a great illusion! Where in this world shall we find roses without thorns? In place of the one cross of which we are unburdened, may we not be laden with others of a heavier weight? *Qui melius scit pati, majorem tenebit pacem.* (Imit. l. 2, c. iii.) Let us imitate St. Joseph, whose perseverance was unshaken. He had with him the Son and the Mother. God is everywhere. The priest has in every place a church in which Jesus Christ resides. He can have everywhere before his eyes a crucifix. He can everywhere practise piety. He can every day offer up the holy sacrifice of the Mass. At all times he can recommend himself to Mary the Virgin. What remarkable aids, sources of grace and happiness are at his command.

One thinks he can vindicate his inconstancy by saying: I want to leave this position because I am liable to make mistakes here; because I have no time for prayer; because my efforts prove useless, and I can do no good as long as I remain. Any priest who will reflect will at once see the frivolity of these pretexts. You speak of faults. Where is the place where none are committed? Where will you commit fewer faults than in the place where abundant blessings are obtained by obedience and patience? Let us

give as much time and devotion to prayer as possible; God can ask no more. Let us, if need be, sacrifice God's glory, even the sweetness of our communication with Him, in prayer. We shall lose nothing. We can pay homage to this great King even when we leave His presence to labor for His interest. "But I am useless here, for I do no good." Are you certain of this? To the presence of Jesus Christ in Egypt the Fathers attribute the graces which filled the solitudes of that country with saints. God has perhaps placed you in this parish in order to deserve, by your prayers and sufferings, the blessings He will pour down upon it at a time best known to Himself. You may perhaps aid herein the conversion of a soul which in the hands of Providence will be an instrument of sanctification to many others. It would be impious to say that Jesus Christ did no good by His continual sufferings and death for the salvation of mankind. Granting that the only advantage of your position consists in bearing crosses patiently, is it not encouraging to know that you thereby expiate your sins, suffer your purgatory in this world, and give almighty God the most certain evidence of your love for Him.

Third Point.—Return of the holy family to Nazareth. "When Herod was dead, behold an angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph in Egypt, saying: Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel. . . Who rose and took the Child and His Mother, and came into the land of Israel . . . and coming he dwelt in a city called Nazareth." (Matt. ii. 19–23.)

We discover here the same promptness to obey, the same unwavering confidence in the paternal care of Providence. Joseph leaves Egypt and returns into the land of Israel as soon as he learns that such is the will of God. As the place, however, of the future abode was not specified, he chooses Nazareth, the place of the incarnation of the child Jesus, where he thinks Jesus can be easily brought up and where he will be less liable to lose his holy treasure. In matters which are left to our own judgment, let us use our faith, and reason enlightened by faith; let us never act with impulse, and much less with passion. "In which labor, in which manner can I best serve God? where shall I be least exposed to lose His love?" Let this principle be our guide. This conformity to God's will is logical obedience.

Let us seek the kingdom of God and His justice; the rest shall be given us over and above. We may receive, perhaps, more than we had hoped for, and that also from an unsuspected source. But to have a claim upon Providence we must place ourselves entirely under His control in every circumstance and for any length of time suitable to His views.

A colloquy with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. How little I have thus far imitated them in the practice of a virtue so beneficial and so consoling! I will, therefore, humble myself in their presence, without fear of reproach however; with simplicity and sorrow in my heart. I make a firm resolve to do better; I will pray to them to bless the resolution with which they have inspired me.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Departure of the holy family for Egypt. "The angel of the Lord appeared in sleep to Joseph and said to Him: Arise, take the Child and His Mother, fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell you." There never was a command apparently so difficult to accomplish, and at the same time so unreasonable. Joseph said not a word of complaint, neither did he delay one moment. The ways of the Lord are for us a sacred thing; let us fear nothing so much as to lose His path.

Second Point.—Sojourn of the holy family in Egypt. Joseph waits patiently. Joseph came into the strange country in obedience to God's command; he will not leave it except for the same motive. The desire for a change of position sometimes troubles good priests; this is a temptation. In place of one cross, which they lay aside, they shall have perhaps to take others more numerous and burdensome. Is there anything more desirable than to atone for our sins, and give almighty God an evidence of our love?

Third Point.—Return of the holy family to Nazareth. "After the death of Herod, the angel appeared in sleep to Joseph, and said to him: Arise, take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel." We notice the same promptness in obeying, the same unwavering confidence in the care of Providence. Let us seek the kingdom of God and His justice; the rest will always be given to us. Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Ah, how little I have hitherto imitated them in the practice of a virtue so beneficial and consoling!

MEDITATION XXXI.

THE GOOD PRIEST RESPECTS PROVIDENCE.

1.—*He Sees Providence in all Things.*
2.—*He Submits to It.*
3.—*He Relies on It.*

First Point.—The good priest sees Providence in all things. Although we know by faith that nothing escapes the vigilant care of God, who governs the world as a father governs his family, we nevertheless fail to see the action of His providence except in the *ensemble* of our lives, as in the case of important events. The interior man perceives and adores Providence in minor things and in the smallest circumstances. St. Ignatius saw it in the little flower placed by the roadside to recreate his eye and embellish the place of his exile, and this very thought caused him to shed tears of gratitude. St. Francis de Sales and St. Vincent of Paul saw Providence in the poor, infirm or importunate persons, who sometimes called on them when engaged in their most serious occupations to solicit their charity or advice, and thereby exercise their patience. Everything is under the eye of Providence, even the bird that is about to die. "One of them will not fall upon the ground without your Father." (Matt. vi. 28.) The very hair of your head. "A hair of your head shall not perish." (Luc. xxi. 18.) Why should I stop at secondary causes, which are the means used by God, instead of at all times and in everything looking up to God Himself, who is the principal cause. "As it has pleased the Lord, so it is done." (Job, i. 21.) "The hand of God has touched me." (Ib. xix. 21.) Thou, O my God, hast ordered everything; whatever happens is the effect of Thy will, which commands or permits, and the first homage I owe Thy providence is a homage of faith; the second is a homage of submission.

Second Point.—The good priest submits in all things to the dispositions of Providence. When the master speaks, the servant's duty is to obey. When God makes His will known, men ought to submit to it, for of all masters the greatest is the Lord. "He is the Lord." He is Master by right, and can command as He sees fit. He is Master in fact, for He executes what He has willed, notwithstanding our complaints and opposition. Here are, therefore, two motives for me readily to resign myself to the will of His providence: *justice*—He has the right to order everything

according to His views; *necessity*—is it not better for me to obey willingly, and thus to acquire merit, than to lose the merit of obedience by criminal and useless expedients to oppose His designs? God has His own designs, and as He formed them without me, He will also accomplish them without me. He may wish me to meet with a certain disappointment In spite of my lack of resignation I must meet with opposition. His will, after all, and not mine shall be done, "His counsel shall stand and all His will shall be done." (Is. xliv. 10.)

What did Pharaoh gain by his hardness of heart? Did he prevent the Lord from freeing his people at the time and in the manner He willed? What strength can prevail against the Almighty? Oh, how wise is he who makes a virtue out of necessity, and who, by resignation, alleviates and sanctifies sorrows which he would only aggravate by revolt! "Shall not my soul be subject to God?" (Ps. lxi. 2.) Wilt not thou drink the cup? Think not of what it contains, but of Him only who presents it to thee. He is a Master; He uses His right; He is God. Canst thou measure your strength with His omnipotence? Consider moreover that He is a Father; rely upon His goodness. "Shall not I drink the chalice which the Father gave me?" (Joan. xviii. 11.)

Third Point.—The good priest confides in all the designs of Providence. If it be true that God governs all things (Sap. vi. 8), it is equally true that He bestows particular care on those who rely implicitly on His providence, and especially on His ministers, who have left all things in order to follow Him. St. Mark, in relating the miraculous multiplication of the loaves, gives us three powerful motives of entire confidence in the good Master for whom we labor. God in His providence watches over us; He knows our wants before even we think of imploring His aid, and is ready to help us. "He saw a multitude." (Marc. vi. 34.) His heart is moved with compassion. He feels for our evils and dangers more keenly than we do ourselves. "He had compassion on them." His power is equal to His goodness; bread multiplies miraculously in His hands, and the multitude is satisfied. "They all did eat and were filled."

How admirable is Providence! If such be Thy solicitude for our bodily welfare, how much wilt Thou do for our souls! How blessed I should be, O my God, if I allowed myself to be guided wholly by my faith! It teaches me that nothing can stay Thee in the execution of Thy designs. It teaches me that Thy infinite wisdom conducts everything with an admirable blending of omnipotence and of gentleness; that it knows how to draw good out of evil, and turn obstacles into means of success. Never was the

patriarch Joseph so near the throne as when he was cast into prison. It teaches me that Thou lovest me more than I can love myself; that Thou considerest my sufferings and my wants with the eyes of a father; that no mother has for her child a tenderness equal to that which Thou hast toward me. "Turn, my soul, into thy rest." (Ps. cxiv. 9.) "In peace, in the self-same I will sleep and I will rest." (Ps. iv. 5.) "The Lord ruleth me, and nothing shall be wanting to me." (Ps. xxii. 1.) "Although He shall kill me, I will trust in Him." (Job, xiii. 15.)

I am about to say Mass, O my God, and I can enjoy this privilege every day. I ought certainly to rest confidently in the arms of Providence. What canst Thou refuse me, when Thou givest me Thy Son? *Mitte curas inanes, O sacerdos, et omnem spem atque fiduciam in Patre tuo coelesti repone, qui tibi quotidie Filium suum unigenitum dat in altaris sacramento.* (Scut. Fid. ix. Med. 1.) Thou ceasest not, O Lord, to look down propitiously, unless their ingratitude forbid it, on those who have received of Thee a favor so admirable, and such a convincing proof of Thy love.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—I should see Providence in everything. The spiritual man perceives and adores it in the smallest things. Everything, in fact, is under its eye: the little bird, the lily which grows and blossoms, the very hair of our head. Thou, O Lord, hast ordered everything; the first homage I owe Thy providence is a homage of faith; the second is a homage of obedience.

Second Point.—I must submit in everything to the designs of Providence. When the master has spoken the servant should obey. The greatest of all the masters is the Lord; Master by right, Master in fact. *Justice* and *necessity* demand of me submission. What did Pharaoh gain by his hardness of heart? What force can prevail against the Almighty?

Third Point.—The good priest must rely on all of the designs of Providence. God takes particular care of those who place all their cares in His hand. How happy I should be, O my God, if I always permitted myself to be guided by my faith! It teaches me that nothing can resist Thy power; that nothing escapes Thy wisdom which can draw good from evil. Finally, Thou lovest me much more than I can love myself. Remember well, my soul, those consoling truths.

MEDITATION XXXII.

TWO OTHER DUTIES OF THE GOOD PRIEST TOWARD PROVIDENCE

1.—*He Gains Respect for Providence.*
2.—*He is Its Worthy Instrument.*

First Point.—The good priest gains respect for Providence. He teaches a firm belief in Providence, frequently reminds the people of it; and applies himself to excite and develop in the hearts of all the sentiments which this belief inculcates.

In the ages of faith men saw everywhere the action of Providence; in our days of levity and proud rationalism, they will not see it anywhere. Some do not believe in this Providence, which is ever solicitous for our welfare and happiness. Others do not bestow a thought on Providence. Nearly all act as if it were to them a perfect stranger, entirely indifferent to our interests. In the higher grades of society, they depend upon the extension of industry, the conquests of science, the progress of civilization. With regard to the government of this world, they think that they have no need of God. Among the ordinary classes, the laboring man, the head of a family, and others rely entirely on the strength of their arms, their skill, their speculations, to gain a livelihood to raise themselves above poverty.

Hence arises that heathenish solicitude for the future. "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or what shall we put on? After all these things do the heathen seek." (Matt. vi. 31, 32.) From this source come the profanation of the Lord's Day by work; and a great many evils which we shall be powerless to destroy as long as we shall not have settled in our souls the conviction of this capital truth: that our only interest is to have God's friendship, that nothing can injure those whom God protects, that everything aids the happiness of those who love Him, yea, the very envy of their enemies. Was it not to the anger of tyrants that the martyrs owed their palms and their crowns?

It is quite important to insist on this point, and to recur to it often in the instructions we give our people. There are so many in our day whom the Spirit of God calls, "Exiled from the eternal Providence." (Sap. xvii. 2.) They perish miserably, because, instead of trusting in the power, wisdom, and goodness of God, their Creator and Father, they place all their reliance in themselves.

"Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, . . . and whose heart departeth from the Lord." (Jer. xvii. 5.)

Second Point.—The good priest is himself a worthy instrument of Providence. Jesus Christ desired that His apostles should themselves distribute the loaves which He had multiplied miraculously in the desert; at all times the priests have been the dispensers of the divine graces and blessings. They are the ordinary ministers of Providence; and although the first object of their mission be the salvation of souls by preaching the word of God, and administering the sacraments, they have also important duties to fulfil toward those who suffer temporal afflictions. The care of the poor is so particularly *their* work that they are named *provisores pauperum.* (St. Just., Ap. 2.) The epistles of St. Paul prove his affection for the poor; we see in them that he ever remembers them, as Saint Peter and Saint James had strongly recommended. He felt so much compassion for them in their wants that he ordered collections taken up for them in the churches, and went himself on a journey to Jerusalem to succor the poor of that city.

Such is the spirit of the Catholic clergy. Compassion for the unfortunate has passed from the heart of Jesus Christ into the hearts of His good priests. Recall to mind the John the Almoners, the Paulins, the Vincents of Paul, the Regises, the Charles Borromeos. Whoever has received the priestly ordination, and especially he who is a pastor, must have heard re-echoed in his heart the words of the prophet: "To thee is the poor man left, thou wilt be a helper to the orphan." (Ps. ix. 14.) To you the care of the poor has been intrusted, you shall be the protector of the orphan. It is your duty to assist out of your own means, and to even solicit help for them. This is one of your glories: *Gloria sacerdotum est pauperum inopiae providere.* (St. Hier. Ep. ad Nepot.) Say to the rich with St. Augustine: *Quia ad borum necessitatem explendam idonei non sumus, ad vos legati ipsorum sumus.* (Serm. lviii. in verb. Dom.) There is nothing that so much exalts our ministry as this sacred and generous devotedness to the poor; nothing so much wins the esteem and confidence which always bring most happy results. The mere suspicion of the contrary vice would brand our labors with sterility.

Be not satisfied with giving alms; give them according to the two rules prescribed by the great Apostle: "He that giveth with simplicity . . . he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness." (Rom. xii. 8.) Simplicity demands that you banish all purely human motives, motives of self-interest or vanity, seeking only the glory of the Lord and the relief of your brother. The cheerfulness which

accompanies the gift augments its value before God. "Not with sadness or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. ix. 7.)

What has been my conduct hitherto toward those who, faith teaches me, are the suffering members of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ Himself? Has my house been an asylum ever opened to receive them? Did I keep note of all the poor of my parish? Did I comfort them in their sorrows, visit them in their illness, instruct those who were ignorant? This is the example given by the Saviour, who declared that for them especially He had been sent by His Father. "To preach the Gospel to the poor He has sent me." (Luc. iv. 18.) What shame for the priesthood, when the priest allows himself to be outdone by lay people in charity to our neighbors. "A certain priest passed him by, . . . in like manner also a Levite . . . but a Samaritan seeing him was moved with compassion." (Luc. x. 31, et seq.)

O Jesus, I thought I loved the poor, and now I acknowledge that my charity for them has been cold and ineffective. Thy Sacred Heart every day unites itself to mine. When wilt Thou give to me a share of that compassion which shone in Thy actions as well as in Thy words? Grant it this day, I beseech Thee; I will henceforth do more than ever to show honor and gain respect for Thy providence. I will also encourage this reliance on Providence as much as my capacity will permit. I will make its workings visible to the unfortunate by the care I will bestow upon them. I wish to be among those to whom Thou shalt say at the last day, "I was hungry, and you gave Me to eat. . . . I was a stranger and you took Me in, naked and you covered Me. . . . As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to Me."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good priest gains respect for Providence. He establishes a firm belief in Providence; frequently reminds the people of it, and aims at exciting and developing in the hearts of all the sentiments which this belief engenders. Some do not believe in it, others do not reflect on it; nearly all act as if Providence had no interest in our welfare. Innumerable are the evils which flow from want of belief in Providence.

Second Point.—The good priest is the worthy instrument of Providence. In all ages the priests have been the dispensers of divine graces and blessings. The care of the poor and of the orphans is in an especial manner the work of the priest, whom tradition calls *provisores pauperum.* Whoever has received priestly

ordination, and he especially who is a pastor, must have heard the words of the prophet re-echoing in his soul: "To thee is the poor man left; thou wilt be a helper to the orphan."

MEDITATION XXXIII.

JESUS AT THE AGE OF TWELVE LEAVES FOR A SHORT TIME THE COMPANY OF HIS PARENTS. LET US MAKE TO GOD THE SACRIFICE OF OUR MOST LEGITIMATE AND DEAREST AFFECTIONS.

The precept of the love of children for their parents is, according to St. Paul, the first to which a reward was annexed. "The first with a promise." (Eph. vi. 2.) There is nothing so laudable, nothing so holy as this love, provided it be subordinate to that we owe to God; for, as St. Bernard says emphatically, *Si impium est contemnere matrem, contemnere tamen propter Christum piissimum est.* (Ep. civ.) Now, if we should be ready to break asunder sacred ties at the first sign of God's will, how much more should this disposition sway us in matters of a less legitimate affection. Let us be docile to the voice of grace when it urges us to sacrifice to God the love of our relatives, and all our natural affections. Behold three motives for those sacrifices:

1.—*The Example of Jesus Christ.*
2.—*The Rewards We may Claim for those Sacrifices.*
3.—*The Punishment to be Feared for their Rejection.*

First Point.—The example of Jesus Christ. The filial piety of the Saviour was just as eminent as His other virtues, which were all infinite. Tertullian has very ably said that there never was a father so much a father as God, and we may say likewise that no son was ever so much a son as Jesus. He knew what mortal anguish His absence would cause His Blessed Mother; and He nevertheless glides away from her vigilant eye. How could He bring Himself to impose upon her such a sacrifice? He was desirous perhaps to prepare her long in advance for the much sadder events of Calvary, for the bitter cup she was destined to drink there, to the very dregs. He intended certainly through this keen affliction to perfect her virtues, and enrich her with new merits. He also wished to console religious souls from which he conceals Himself from time to time, and even seems to forsake. He shows them in the example of His own Mother that such trials are more

the effect of His love than a mark of His displeasure. He, above all, intended to teach His ministers that out of obedience to God and zeal for His glory, they should ever be ready to sacrifice whatever is most dear to them in the world. The parents whom Jesus temporarily left were quite worthy of His affection, and He loved them most tenderly. Yet He gives up the pleasures of the house of Nazareth the moment He discovers the will of His Father. He minds not the grief produced by the deep anxiety of His parents. He leaves Mary and Joseph without bidding them adieu, without telling them how long they will be deprived of His presence, leaving them harassed by the most painful doubts. He sees only the will of His Father; His human nature immediately surrenders.

What a lesson for priests enervated by human affections. For the sake of his mission the priest sacrifices the quietness of his retreat, surrenders the advantage of a life like that at Nazareth, the company of Mary and Joseph. Can I persuade myself that I am living a life of self-abnegation while enjoying the comforts of a home among relatives? It is not in a place like this that I can acquire the heroic character of an apostle. "Neither is it found in the land of them that live in delights." (Job, xxviii. 13.) Should I pander to flesh and blood when God speaketh? To be a fisher of men is a noble employment; to obtain success, however, I must leave all—boats, nets, parents, all. "They having left their nets and their parents, followed Him." (Matt. iv. 22.)

Second Point.—Rewards annexed to this sacrifice. I have already meditated upon a promise which ought to satisfy the highest as well as the most holy ambition. "Every one who will leave home, or brothers or sisters, or father or mother, for My name's sake, shall receive an hundred-fold and possess life everlasting." (Matt. xix. 29.) Let us not, however, now, mention life everlasting.

In this very life what peace, what consolation in the thought! I have made to God a sacrifice which must have pleased Him; for it has cost me much. His love alone enabled me to make this sacrifice. Ah, my Lord, it is true therefore that I love Thee. Of this I have given Thee a proof and satisfied myself also. Thou, O my God, didst sustain me in this struggle. This victory is a new effect of Thy love for me. However, as Thou didst love me when the grace was granted, how much more must Thou love me on account of its good use.

Henceforth there are no more obstacles to the sweet intercourse of the good priest with God. The wall of separation is taken down. "He who knoweth My will and doeth it," says Jesus Christ, "the same is he who loveth Me . . . and I will love him and I

will make Myself known to him. My Father and I will come to him; we shall make our abode in him." (John xiv. 21–23.) Oh! how sincere is the happiness of those whom Jesus Christ places in the ranks of His tried friends. They know Him; they already behold Him in anticipation. *Manifestabo ei meipsum.* Oh, how pleasant is the dwelling of God in them! *Mansionem apud eum faciemus!* Is not this the beginning of the beatitude of heaven? Such souls are the object of a special Providence. The Almighty protects these "as the pupil of His eye." The contradictions and temptations which they experience, even the very faults which they commit through human frailty, all prove beneficial to them. (Rom. viii. 28.) Can we reflect on the lives of the saints without recalling to mind the generous emulation between God and His faithful servants? Abraham consented to immolate his beloved Isaac, that son in whom centered all his hopes, and immediately God declares: "By My own self I have sworn, says the Lord, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not spared thy only son for My sake, I will bless thee." (Genesis.) O Priest of God, consider what the Almighty expects of you. He wishes you to sacrifice that which divides the affections of your heart. Then nothing will prevent the infusion of His graces. He will grant you the gift of prayer, the discernment of spirits, prudence in guiding souls, and unusual facility to practise all the virtues of your holy state.

Thus Jesus generally treats those who give themselves to Him without reserve. Such are the blessings I have lost by not denying myself useless gratifications. How sad, O my God, has been my blindness! Permit me not to be blinded again. I will now break asunder all the ties which bind me to things of earth. To Thee alone I will cling. "It is good for me to adhere to my God." (Ps. lxxii. 26.) Every other attachment is, to say the least, useless and almost sinful.

Third Point.—Punishment to be feared for refusal to make the sacrifice. God never allows Himself to be outdone in generosity. He asks us merely to give something in return. Our ingratitude, however, offends His infinite goodness, and may change designs of mercy into a resolve of chastisement. He knocks at the door of our hearts, and often remains a long time without admission. When we continue to reject His amiable advances, He withdraws. Christ desires the exclusive love of those whom He has chosen to be His priests. He urges you to banish those affections too earthly and unworthy of a man destined to perform great things. How is it possible that you do not seem to listen to His voice, and that you continue to resist His desires? Take

heed that your indifference may not cause silence on the part of Jesus. If you are not afraid to grieve Him, fear at least to provoke His resentment. He will permit you to be exposed to some dangerous temptation, and what will become of you when protected by ordinary graces only? He will suffer you to fall into habitual tepidity, and from this torpor you will sink into spiritual death. How easy is the transition? Do not think that this adorable Saviour will employ you as an instrument of salvation for your brethren. The relation between yourself and Jesus Christ should be as close as the relation between the artisan and his utensils. Remember the unprofitable servant, "the unprofitable servant cast into exterior darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." I believe, O my God, that Thou hatest robbery in a holocaust. (Is. lxi. 8.) That whosoever loveth father and mother more than Thee, is not worthy of Thee. (Matt. x. 37.) That no one can serve two masters, the world and God. I believe that he who gathereth not with Thee, scattereth. (Matt. xii. 30.) Ah, Lord, how these words annoy me! Which shall be my fate, if, at the moment of death, when I shall appear before Thy tribunal, Thou wilt place under my eyes a long series of graces and favors which might have been the reward of my assiduity, but which have been lost through my indifference. Now, however, I will cease this life of tepidity. I will put off no longer a sacrifice which should have been made long ago. I promise to imitate Thee in Thy universal detachment. Henceforth I shall be able to say with greater confidence, "I am thine, for to-day while offering myself with the holy Victim on the altar, there will be no reserve in my heart. Thou shalt be all mine, and certainly I ought to give myself up entirely to Thee."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The example of Jesus Christ urges us to offer to God the sacrifice of our dearest affections. Never was there a son who loved His parents more tenderly. Never were there parents more worthy of the affection of a son. He knew well what anguish His absence would cause them; He leaves them, however, as soon as He has discovered the will of God, without informing them of the duration of His absence, without even bidding them adieu. He considers nothing but the will of His heavenly Father. To this will He sacrifices nature. Am I at liberty to prefer nature to God's desires?

Second Point.—What I may hope for from this sacrifice. Not to speak of the world to come, where an immense happiness is in

store for us, think of the peace and comfort experienced in this very life. "I have offered to God a sacrifice which must have been pleasing to Him; for it cost me a great effort. I am therefore certain, O my Lord, that I love Thee." There are no more obstacles to intercourse between God and soul. "He who does My will, the same loveth Me." "My Father and I will come to him, and We shall make our abode in him." O dwelling of God in us! Is not this heaven in anticipation!

Third Point.—What we must fear if we refuse to make the sacrifice. Our generosity to God always excites His own. He asks simply that He may be able to give. Our ingratitude, however, may change His designs of mercy into designs of punishment. What shall become of me, O my Lord, when I shall appear before Thy tribunal, if Thou wilt place under my eyes a long series of graces and favors which would have been the reward of my resolution, and which I have lost through my indifference. O my God, Thou wilt be all mine. Is it too much that I give myself entirely to Thee?

MEDITATION XXXIV.

JESUS LOST AND FOUND. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate those Concerned.*
2.—*Listen to their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Keep in mind the mystery: "The parents of Jesus went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn feast of the Pasch, and when the Child was twelve years old, He went with them. When they returned, however, the Child remained at Jerusalem, and they knew it not. . . . They sought Him in vain among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. It was only on the third day that they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions. . . Seeing Him they were filled with wonder and joy, and His Mother said to Him: 'Son why hast Thou done so to us; behold Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing?' And He said to them: 'How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?'" (Luc. ii. 41.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the ways leading to Jerusalem; the great number of people going to or returning from the solemnity, the streets of the city, the Temple.

Third Prelude.—Demand grace to understand fully the

spirit of this mystery, and to imitate in the infant Jesus the virtues which He manifests.

First Point.—Contemplate those concerned. Mary and Joseph. What deep affliction appears in all their features! They have lost Jesus. Where is He? Had He fallen into the hands of a new Herod? How supreme their joy at finding Him when they discover the child Jesus in the Temple. He keenly feels the grief He has occasioned His parents, and yet He is perfectly calm. Consider and admire His modesty, His gravity, His meekness. The doctors who surround Him are attentive to His questions and His answers. They look wonderingly at each other. The question uppermost in their minds is: "Who can this child be?" From each of them a lesson can be learned.

Second Point.—Consider the words. Mary and Joseph return to Jerusalem, making inquiries from all whom they meet on the road and in the streets of Jerusalem. The same sad answer comes from all, "We did not see Him." How pitiful the sighs which escape from their hearts! How fervent the prayers they pour forth to God and to Jesus Himself. They hear conversations on all sides. These are insipid. The sweet name of Jesus is not mentioned.

Finally they find Him in the Temple. Joseph's joy is expressed only in tears. But how well do the words of Mary express the tenderness of her maternal heart and the anguish she has experienced. "Son." How sweet is the word to her lips now that she beholds Him with her eyes. O Thou Son of God, and my own Son also, only Son of Thy Father who is in heaven, and of Thy Mother whom Thou didst choose here below! O Thou, the most amiable and most beloved of sons! "Why hast Thou done so to us?" Although complaining, Mary really expresses her anxious love. "Behold Thy father and I." Joseph well deserves to be associated with Mary in her joy, as he was associated with her in her sorrow. He had for Jesus the heart of a father, as she had for Him the heart of a mother. "We sought Thee sorrowing." Thou art our only treasure in the world. We knew not what had become of Thee.

Consider especially and meditate upon the answer of the Saviour. It seems a little harsh. It is, however, entirely proper.

In Mary's words we discover the complaint of the Mother; zeal for God's glory appears in the answer of the Son. Learn, O Priests of God, that being bound by your office to seek the interests of God alone in this world, you should remain indifferent to matters of earth considered in themselves, and employ yourself only with the things of heaven. A real apostle of Christ has no country,

no relatives; the earth is his dwelling, all men are his brethren; God alone is his Father and his all. "I must be about the things of My Father." This must be my *oportet*. It is my profession; each man has his own. I might not have assumed the obligation. I voluntarily became a priest, and I must be faithful to my duty. "I must be." These are words full of energy. To say *I must* apply myself to the affairs of my Father, would be saying too little; *I* must *be* about them; I must give my whole being to them, I must spend myself in their discharge.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus remains at Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. Ah, how painful it is to Him to grieve them! But the glory of God should be preferred to everything else. It was necessary to give this important lesson to His successors in His priesthood, to teach them by His example the obligation of sacrificing everything to duty. His saintly parents will themselves derive great benefit from this trial. Yet what will become of Him during those three days? Who will give food to this child? Who will afford Him shelter at night? Contemplate your God asking for bread from door to door; asking for a lodging which was perhaps refused Him. Have then the same confidence as your Saviour; if you devote yourself entirely to the service of your heavenly Father, He will take care of you. Watch over His interests, and He will not forget your welfare.

Deep was the affliction of Mary and Joseph when they sought their Son. Their sorrow does not diminish in the least their peaceful submission to the will of Heaven. They adore what they can not comprehend. They never abandon hope. Their confidence and unremitting search are compensated by the finding of their treasure, whose loss had caused them so many bitter tears. "They find in the Temple Him whom they had lost amid the noise and throng of people." Jesus reminds them that obedience is due first to His heavenly Father. He follows them, however, and goes back with them to Nazareth. In all of this I find much enlightenment, many examples offered for imitation.

Colloquy with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph. Adore Jesus Christ, the eternal Word, come into this world in human flesh to teach true holiness! He has shown us the example from the moment of His incarnation; and from the present time He begins to inculcate it by a few admirable words. Beg of Him to give you grace to imitate His zeal for the glory of God, His spirit of sacrifice, His humility, His poverty. Participate in the sorrow and next in the joy of Mary and Joseph. Jesus is lost—what an affliction! Jesus is found again—what happiness! See in the two occurrences the characteristics of true love! With Mary and Joseph seek

Jesus in the solemn, silent Temple of God, and in prayer; you shall have, like them, the happiness of finding Him again. But forget not that the whole of your existence is due to the service of God, your heavenly Father. "I must be about the things of My Father."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate those concerned. Mary and Joseph! How deep their affliction! They have lost Jesus. What joy when they find Him? The child Jesus in the Temple. Remark His calmness, His modesty! The doctors. Consider how attentive they are to all His questions and answers. Of all of this you must derive some benefit.

Second Point.—Hear the words—of Mary: "Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I sought Thee sorrowful. Thou art our only treasure on earth, we knew not what had become of Thee." Of Jesus: "Why sought you Me? Do you not know that I must be about the things of My Father?" O my God, when shall I also understand that this ought to be my continual, my exclusive occupation?

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus remains at Jerusalem unknown to His parents. It pains Him much to grieve them. But the glory of His Father demands it. What became of Him during those three days? If I strive to promote the interests of God, He will not forget mine. Mary and Joseph seek their Son in deep affliction. But their hope never fails, and their joy is supreme when they find the treasure they had lost. It is in the silent Temple that you will find God again, if you have lost Him in the crowds and the turmoil of the world.

MEDITATION XXXV.

JESUS AT NAZARETH. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in their Home at Nazareth.*

2.—*Hear their Words.*

3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Jesus, having been found in the Temple by Mary and Joseph, went down with them to Nazareth; "and He was subject to them. And His Mother kept all these things in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men." (Luc. ii. 51, 52.)

Second Prelude.—Ask for a grace suitable to the mystery and to your needs; for instance, love for interior and hidden life, the spirit of prayer and of obedience.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. The men who were then living, see them moving along like opposing streams. Their passions and their selfishness especially urge them on. In the upper classes see those prominent, rich, learned men swelled with pride. All are ambitious to advance their interests. All strive to win attention and admiration. Below these, see the ordinary people, the workmen, jealous, discontented, unwilling to submit to the inferiority of their condition. Deplore this universal blindness. In the holy family of Nazareth all is calm! Mary attends to the work of her humble house, Joseph is at work in his little shop. Jesus labors with His parents, anticipating their desires, showing that He is happy to obey them. What grace shines on His countenance! What ineffable sweetness is noticeable in Jesus as a youth, as a young man! What simple dignity in His bearing, what sweet gravity, what heavenly modesty in all His exterior! Consider the angels who behold this spectacle in prolonged ravishment; and God the Father, whose eyes rest with complacency on His well-beloved Son, who humbles Himself to restore His glory. If you also wish to please God, cause joy in heaven, imitate Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in that hidden life, a life of entire resignation to the care of Providence.

Second Point.—Hear their words. They are few. The conversation of this family is in heaven. Necessity and charity are the only cause for interrupting the silence which habitually reigns among them. They are *moderate*, and fitly express the peace which dwells in their souls. Noisy talk is never heard there. "He shall not contend nor cry out." (Matt. xii. 19.) Their conversation governed by humility, meekness, zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. It is as saintly and as perfect as the sentiments from which it arises. St. Joseph speaks but little, Mary still less, and the Word Incarnate speaks only when the glory of His Father and the interests of Mary and Joseph require it. In this sanctuary, the holiest of the world, this family rarely converses with outsiders, but continually with God. Recollect yourself profoundly, listen to those celestial words which enrapture the angels. In this school, O Priest of God, you will learn the divine art of meditation.

Third Point.—Consider the actions of the holy family. Through love of us the Son of God subjects Himself to labor. In His childhood He helps His Mother in her domestic occupations as soon as He has become able to do anything; He acts like a serv-

ant toward her. When His strength is sufficiently developed, He shares with Joseph the labors of the humble and hard profession of a carpenter. "In labors from My youth." He also eats His bread in the sweat of His brow. See how He elevates, ennobles, and comforts the painful condition of the laboring man. Who will dare despise what God incarnate has honored! How readily Christ obeys, not in His childhood only, but even when He has arrived at man's estate! With what patience He bears the caprices, the overbearing manner, and even the contempt of strangers who give Him orders, speak to Him as they would to a mercenary, treat Him as a menial who should consider Himself happy when employed by men who are willing to purchase His labor with their money. Admire His charity in His intercourse with neighbors. His power in prayer. The perfection of each one of His actions, yea, the perfection of the most common of them. Mary and Joseph keep their eyes fixed on Him and meditate in silence and delight on all the circumstances of this mystery. "His Mother kept all those words in her heart." (Luc. ii. 51.)

Colloquy with the three persons of the holy family. Adore Jesus Christ in the humble exercise of His hidden virtues, thank Him for making Himself your model in everything, obtain through the ardor of your desires, and the simplicity of your faith, that He may please to fill you with His spirit, that He may give you a share in His interior life, that He may teach you to seek God alone. Have recourse to the powerful intercession of Mary and Joseph. They have nothing so much at heart as to see you imitating the virtues which they themselves imitated in the "Word made flesh," and practised at Nazareth. *Our Father, Hail Mary.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. The men who were at that time on earth. Their continual agitation. Each under the empire of his passion. Consider people in the different classes. In the holy family of Nazareth, calmness and peace the effects of true virtue. In heaven the angels, God the Father, whose eyes rest with complacency on the holy family. Imitate Jesus, Mary, and Joseph in their hidden life.

Second Point.—Hear the words. They are few. They are moderate. They are well regulated. They are all holy, just as the sentiments which they express. Consider attentively that in this school you ought to learn the divine art of meditation, the precious secrets of the interior life.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. The labor to which the master of the universe subjects Himself. He helps His Mother in her domestic work. He labors with St. Joseph at an ordinary and laborious trade. He earns His bread in the sweat of His brow. Who would dare despise what the Son of God honors! Contemplate His obedience, patience, humility. His charity to all in His intercourse with them. What a subject for meditation! Colloquy with the three persons of the holy family.

MEDITATION XXXVI.

MYSTERY OF THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST AT NAZARETH.

1.—*It Brings Tranquillity to our Souls.*
2.—*It Affords us Consolation.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the humble house of Nazareth, the poor apartments, the shop of St. Joseph, the small apartment of Jesus, etc.

Second Prelude.—Ask to understand this mystery, to love an obscure life, which is incompatible with human pride, which, however, eternal wisdom has exalted.

First Point—The mystery of the hidden life of Jesus Christ tranquilizes our soul and banishes a most dangerous malady. Ambition to obtain the esteem and affection of people, a desire to gain notoriety, to display our talents, to make use of our position, of the real or fancied good we do for our own advantage, place the soul in a very lamentable condition. Pride is its fundamental quality; and it is so prevalent as to seem inherent in the human heart. There is scarcely any advice so unpalatable as that of the Imitation of Christ: *Ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari?* There is scarcely any soul, however grounded in virtue, that does not sometimes feel some desire of notoriety, that does not find it painful to live in continual obscurity. To overcome successfully a temptation so dangerous, contemplate the spectacle offered to your faith in the holy house of Nazareth.

Behold God made man, the incarnate Wisdom, who possesses in an infinite degree all the secrets of science, the knowledge of all the tongues, a divine eloquence; who, to the most attractive meekness, unites an incomparable skill in guiding souls and gaining men's hearts; Jesus, the Lord of lords, in whom are contained all the treasures of nature and grace; who has come into this world for the sole purpose of banishing error, destroying vice, sanctify-

ing and saving the human race, this Redeemer expected during so many ages—O incomprehensible mystery! He lives among men, and men do not suspect it, and, far from drawing them to Himself, by the manifestation of His divine qualities, He seems to withdraw from their sight, leading amongst them, not merely the most common, but apparently a meaningless and useless life, a life of the most unworthy of Him, and of His great destiny. He lives in an obscure village, spends His days in a shop, earning His bread, which is the fruit of His labors, like the humblest artisan! This God who created the world, this Master of the universe, employs His life in working as a man of the most obscure condition. O heaven! O earth! was such to be the life of Him on whom you had founded so many hopes!

The Son of God could draw admiring crowds to listen to His eloquent words in the Temple. He could impart knowledge to the learned, teach monarchs the art of governing peoples. This Redeemer promised to the world could have easily overcome provinces and kingdoms to procure the glory of His Father and the happiness of man, teaching the ignorant, healing the sick, converting sinners; but behold He lives a most retired life, not for a few weeks, nor a few months, but nearly His whole life He thus spends in complete obscurity. This lesson was necessary for us, and it is certainly very appropriate to eradicate our pride.

We can not bear to be ignored, to be left without a position or to have a very unimportant one, especially being, or thinking ourselves to be, quite important in the world. We consider this consignment to oblivion and almost obloquy and premature death to the world, as beyond endurance. But what can we say contemplating the example of the Son of God, who wished to be unnoticed, forgotten more completely or for a longer time than falls to our lot? You say that the necessities of the Church are great, that you could do good. Was there no good to be done during the thirty years that Jesus lived at Nazareth; and can you tell the amount of good He should have done, had He made the attempt? You say, Why did God give me these talents, if He be not willing that I should use them? Ask the same question in the case of Christ; then consider this argument. God gave you talents, that you may use them in the time and in the manner that will be agreeable to Him; He gave them to you that you may devote them to His service. Do you think the incense is lost that is burnt in His presence, and for His glory? Can it be used to better advantage? Let us be convinced of this, that man does not bury His talents in the ground who, apparently leading a useless life, yet does the will of his Maker.

Come, children of men, come now with your deceitful measures (Ps. lxi. 10) and your false judgments; speak to me in praise of the esteem of men, and give me your evil counsels. "Manifest thyself to the world." (Jo. vii. 14.) All that I have to do to extinguish such a desire is simply to consider what happens at Nazareth. Who is this child, this youth, this young man, whom the Holy Trinity contemplates with delight, whom the angels adore? Who is this mechanic? Consider how careful He is to hide His identity, how many years He spends in this obscure life. O infinite wisdom! The cloud of obscurity surrounding Thee is for me a bright light. By its help I discover the vanity of all earthly things. I learn to seek God alone, to desire nothing but His esteem and His love.

Second Point.—The mystery of the hidden life of Jesus Christ is for us a source of consolation. During the thirty years of an existence exteriorly so common, nay, apparently so useless, the life of Jesus Christ was such in reality that we can not possibly imagine another life more perfect, more interesting for mankind, or more useful to Christians. His days, which one might call useless, could not be better filled up, or filled with works of a more exalted character. Jesus did not bury His talents permanently out of sight or reach; He employed them for the glory of God and for the use of mankind. If before the appointed time Jesus had left His obscurity; if instead of remaining unknown to even the poor and lowly of his own village, He had filled Jerusalem and the world with the fame of His name; had He ever been occupied in raising the dead to life, converting the people—not only would His life have been imperfect, but, whilst appearing to do great things, He would have obtained no fruitful results. They would have been of no avail, for He would not have done the will of His Father.

Oh, my Lord, it is then true that my perfection, my advancement, my true happiness does not consist in gaining the esteem of people, but only in manifesting my love for Thee, and in deserving Thy affection by the accomplishment of Thy will. Jesus pleased Thee as much in following a humble trade at Nazareth as in His sacrifice on Calvary. And I also can please Thee as well in the lowliest of occupations, when assigned to me by Providence, as in the most prominent and coveted position. This thought is for me full of comfort. What need I care about health, brilliant talents, flattering successes in preaching, in the direction of souls, the government of parishes, if I can equally well glorify God, please Him, in a state of infirmity, with talents of an inferior order, and in the performance of the most ordinary

deeds. The pleasure of God regulated and fixed all things in the life of my Saviour, and made them efficacious, and my desire also is that this motive guide me always and everywhere. I would rather be a worm of the earth to please Thee, than to be a seraph against Thy will; I would rather bear the martyrdom of obscurity to please Thee, than the martyrdom of blood in opposition to Thy will.

Converse with Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, that you may be imbued with their sentiments in regard to hidden life. "You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. iii. 3.) A few moments more and you shall possess in your heart the Master of the universe, who dwelt at Nazareth in the holy house. Shut yourself up with Him within the sanctuary of your heart, and beg of Him to mould you to the requirement of an interior ife. *O Jesu vivens in Maria.* (See prayers after Meditation.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The mystery of the hidden life of Jesus Christ brings quiet to our souls and banishes a most dangerous malady; which is a desire to obtain the esteem and affections of human beings. Are there many souls which relish the advice? *Aimez à etre ignoré et compté pour rien?* Let us behold Jesus at Nazareth. God made man, the incarnate Wisdom, come into the world to save it, leading a most ordinary life, a life apparently quite unworthy of His great destinies. He lives by the work of His hands as a common artisan. He lives during thirty years in this state of obscurity. O Jesus! The obscurity of Thy life at Nazareth is light for me. O vanity of all things! O God alone!

Second Point.—The mystery of the hidden life of Jesus Christ is for us a source of consolation. Such was the life of Christ during those thirty years that you can not imagine one more exalted, more perfect, more holily spent, more useful to the glory of God and the happiness of the world. There is nothing good, nothing great, nothing perfect, save the accomplishment of God's will. By the exercise of His humble trade at Nazareth, Jesus pleased God as much as by His sacrifice on Calvary. What need we care about health, talents, high positions, if we can promote God's glory in sickness, in poverty, in our most ordinary actions? I would rather be a worm of the earth and obey Thy will, than a seraph against Thy will.

MEDITATION XXXVII.

JESUS AT NAZARETH. HIS OBEDIENCE.

"And He was subject to them." (Luc. ii. 51.) St. Luke the Evangelist uses the words we have quoted to sum up a life which was a series of wonderful actions; he is silent about the virtues practised by Jesus Christ during thirty years, and merely mentions His submission to Mary and Joseph. Hereby the spirit of God shows us clearly that He desires to inspire us with a particular esteem for the virtue of obedience, which sums up in itself, as it were, all the sanctity of the Son of God proposed for our imitation. Let us study obedience in our great model and consider that

1.—*Jesus Christ Esteemed and Loved Obedience.*
2.—*Consider how He Practised It.*

First Prelude.—Let us represent to ourselves Our Saviour at Nazareth, receiving the behests of Mary and Joseph. He fulfils them perfectly, because He considers them the commands of His Father.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask of Him grace to understand, to love and practise a virtue which is so dear to Him. *Jesu obedientissime, miserere nobis.*

First Point.—Esteem and love of Jesus Christ for obedience. He Himself has given us instruction in this matter; let us listen to Him. The prophet David, interpreted by St. Paul, places on His lips the following words, when about to become man: "O my Father, Thou wert not pleased with the holocausts offered to Thee up to this day; they were not worthy of Thee . . . but in giving Me a body, Thou madest Me capable of honoring Thee by My obedience, and I said, I come." "Of Me it is written at the head of the book, in the eternity of Thy decrees, that I shall accomplish Thy will. . . . I have willed it, O my God, and this law is written in the middle of my heart."

After His conversation with the woman of Samaria, seeing that His disciples were anxious because he had eaten nothing for a long time, he mentions to them a food of which they knew not, but which never failed Him; He meant obedience to the will of His Father. It renews, it keeps up the strength. He lives on obedience; He wishes to obey as ardently as the famished

man desires to partake of food. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." He declares to us that He came down from heaven, merely to obey His mission; He is to save the world through obedience, as Adam lost it by disobedience. "I came down from heaven, not to do My will, but to do the will of Him who sent Me." (Joan. vi. 38.) He explicitly declares that one will not enter into heaven by saying, Lord, Lord, but by doing the will of His Father. (Matt. vii. 21.) He gives us this virtue as the touchstone of true sanctity, as the most certain means to please Him; as the pledge of every good. If we desire to possess everlasting life, let us keep the commandments. If we desire the love of God and of Christ, let us obey them faithfully. If we wish Christ to bear us the same affection and tenderness as if we were His brothers, His sisters, His mother; we can obtain them as a reward of our obedience. (Matt. xii. 50.) Could He make us more clearly understand how much this virtue is dear to Him? Let us consider His example.

Second Point.—How did Jesus Christ practise obedience? His life among men was a continual exercise of this virtue. He always obeyed His eternal Father; He obeyed Mary and Joseph during thirty years. During His Passion He obeyed His iniquitous judges, and His very executioners. Even now He obeys His own priests.

I. The obedience of Christ begins with His mortal life. "Entering into the world." From the moment of His incarnation He followed the will of His Father as His unswerving rule. He submitted to the laws of nature by dwelling nine months in the womb of His Mother; to the orders of Providence in being born amid inconveniences of a journey and in the poor accommodations of a stable at Bethlehem. He submitted to the circumcision, the presentation in the temple, the exile into Egypt; to the weaknesses and dependence of infancy, to an obscure and apparently useless life. To all these He submitted willingly because it was the will of His Father.

He did not appear before men; did not show forth His wisdom in conversations, His power by miracles, nor His goodness by His innumerable blessings, unless in the time determined by the will of His Father; and to those who desire Him to manifest Himself to the world, he says, that "His hour has not yet come." He confines the ardor of His zeal within the limits of Palestine because His Father had sent Him to the sheep only that were lost of the house of Israel. (Matt. xv. 24.)

He was obedient unto death, and even the death of the cross, being willing rather to lose life than to forfeit obedience. (St.

Bern.) He does indeed pray that the bitter cup may be taken away; he accepts it, however, in order to obey His Father, and to teach us that reluctances once overcome, far from diminishing, enhance our merit and throw into a stronger light our zeal for the glory of the Lord. The obedience which had governed the details of His life regulates also the time and circumstances of His death. Before drawing His last breath, He looks into the sacred oracles which reveal to Him the will of His Father, to discover if all have been fulfilled. Yes, they have; not one prophecy concerning the Messiah remaining without accomplishment. Christ says: "All is consummated, and bowing down the head, He gave up the ghost." (Joan. xix. 30.)

II. The obedience of Jesus to Mary and Joseph during thirty years of His life is relatively more admirable than ours. Obedience is submission. Obedience prefers another will to our own. Consider who He is who obeys Mary and Joseph at Nazareth. He is the eternal Word, the sovereign intelligence, He who gives wisdom to the wise. He is the Master of the universe, to whom all things owe obedience. Whom does He obey? Two creatures, whose merits indeed are extraordinary, who are adorned with most exalted virtues, whose knowledge, however, can no more be compared to His than a spark may be compared to the sun. Consider the manner and extent of His obedience. He obeys promptly, cheerfully, every request of His parents, even anticipating their desires, not only during His childhood, but when He has come to man's estate. Consider how satisfied He is to minister to them. Yet Jesus is the King of kings! Every one can see that He obeys readily and heartily, that all that He does is done through love.

III. Finally, Jesus obeys wicked and selfish men. He submits to the edict of Augustus, which compelled Mary to go from Nazareth to Bethlehem, and finds no excuse in the pride which prompted the Emperor, because he wishes to refer all power to its origin, to God Himself. He submits to the sentence of Pilate, unjust as it was; in him He recognizes the authority of the prince, notwithstanding its outrageous abuse. He obeys His executioners; in all His enemies he sees the ministers and executors of the justice of His Father, who gave Him into their hands. And Christ tells these very men this truth: "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me unless it were given thee from above." (Joan. xix. 2.) I need not recall to mind the mortal life of Jesus Christ. He is now reigning in heaven; and yet he continues to obey. O my soul, canst thou contemplate this model without loving obedience?

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—How much Jesus Christ loved obedience. From His entrance into the world He offers Himself to His Father to honor Him by His submission. "Thou hast given Me a body, and I said: I come, I will accomplish in all things Thy sacred will.... This holy law is imprinted in My heart." He speaks to His apostles of a food of which they knew not, but which was never wanting to Him, meaning obedience to the will of His Father. He declares that He came down from heaven for no other end than to obey. He points out this virtue as the touchstone of true sanctity, a sure pledge of our entrance into heaven. If I practise obedience, Jesus will love me as He would love a brother, a sister, His Mother. I will gain all His favors.

Second Point.—How did Jesus Christ practise obedience? His whole life on earth was a continual exercise of this virtue. He always obeyed His Father. During thirty years He obeyed Mary and Joseph; during His Passion he obeyed prejudiced judges and His very executioners. He submitted to the laws of nature by dwelling during nine months in the womb of His Mother, to the orders of Providence in being born amid the inconveniences of a journey. He submitted Himself to the circumcision, the presentation, the exile. Preaching, miracles, circumstances of places, times—all are fixed by the will of His Father. He obeys unto the death of the cross. His obedience to Mary and Joseph seems still more admirable. Obedience is submission. Consider the being who allows Himself to be governed as a child. Whom does He obey? How does He obey? He obeys even wicked men. He submits to the edict of Augustus, to the sentence of Pilate, to His very executioners whom he considers as the executors of His Father's justice. He also obeys His priests in the adorable mystery of our altars. O my soul, canst thou contemplate this model without loving obedience?

MEDITATION XXXVIII.

SPECIAL REASONS FOR PRIESTS TO IMITATE THE OBEDIENCE OF JESUS CHRIST.

1.—*Their Zeal for the Glory of God.*
2.—*Their Love for the Church.*
3.—*The Solemn Promise made at Ordination.*

First Point.—Zeal for the glory of God should excite the priest to imitate the obedience of Jesus Christ. How excellent a means this virtue is to procure the glory of God we have already seen in the choice which sovereign Wisdom made of it when it became incarnate in order to repair the divine glory dimmed by the disobedience of men. It is certainly an amazing sight to behold a God made man dying on the cross to expiate the sins of mankind. It is a great glory for God to behold a God in the garb of a servant; and I can do nothing more pleasing to God than to unite my dependence to that of His own Son.

Moreover, by this obedience I offer to God the best gift in my possession. I offer that which is dearest to me. Consequently, when, to please Him, I sacrifice riches, honors, lawful pleasures, rest, health, I indeed sacrifice that which is my own, for they are His generous gifts; but when by my obedience I sacrifice my will, I sacrifice my own self, my heart, my liberty. I offer to God all that is dearest in life. I offer to Him what He enjoys most, or rather the only thing which He enjoys. This He demands of me in the most touching language. "Son, give Me thy heart." In the other sacrifices made for His glory, I give Him that which already fully belongs to Him. Of these gifts He may strip me at the time and in the manner He will see fit. When I obey Him I give Him that which is more particularly my property, *my liberty*. Now, this is of all offerings the most flattering to God, who wishes to govern the will of man more as a Father than as a Sovereign. This state is really the kingdom of grace which Jesus Christ came down to establish on earth, a kingdom to whose expansion the priest should direct all his efforts. The object of our ministry is to bring men under the submission of the law of the Almighty. This obedience ought certainly to be very dear to the man whose duty is to procure the glory of God.

Second Point.—The welfare of the Church, second motive for the priest to devote himself to perfect obedience. The Holy Ghost compares the Church to an army in battle array. The one

and the other draw their strength and harmony from that precise discipline which binds together its different parts. In the Church, as in the army, there is only one body, and many members all placed in perfect order. The parish is the union of many faithful under one pastor, the diocese the union of many parishes under one bishop; the Church, the union of all the dioceses under the universal bishop, the Pope, the vicar of Jesus Christ.

When this hierarchical order is faithfully observed and subordination is well kept; when the Sovereign Pastor Jesus Christ governs, through the Sovereign Pontiff, the inferior prelates who receive their authority from the latter; and through these commands all the inferior officers, all the soldiers of the holy militia—then indeed this spiritual army, ever ready to combat, is terrible to hell, "terrible as an army in battle array." (Cant. vi. 3.) Respect for authority is the great power which the Church received from the Saviour and the secret of all her successes. It should grieve us to see this respect for authority, which is the bond and the very life of society, every day growing weaker and weaker in the minds of men. A fever for independence gnaws at the very heart of the social body. Men of our days depend upon themselves alone. Priests, who are the physicians of souls, should eradicate this disease from society, but they can not bring society into submission to the Church if their words and examples do not show that they themselves are the "children of obedience." (1 Pet. i. 14.)

Third Point.—The solemn promise made at his ordination, third motive for the priest to practise perfect obedience. Let us go back in spirit to the important day of our ordination. Our soul was then indelibly marked with the character of the priesthood; to each of us then might be said: *Tu es sacerdos in aeternum.* For the first time in our life uniting our intention with that of the ordaining prelate, we brought down the Son of God on the altar, we ate His flesh and drank His blood; our minds had never before been so entirely recollected, never so full of these most serious thoughts. The pontiff, clothed with all the insignia of his dignity, sitting upon his throne like a sovereign about to receive the oath of allegiance from his subjects, took our hands within his own and put to us the following direct question: *Promittis mihi et successoribus meis reverentiam, et obedientiam?* The answer was as precise as the question: *Promitto.* This promise was one general, absolute, free from all shadows of doubt or mental reservation. No priest could imagine, when he made that promise, that he would be at liberty to choose any office or position, or to change or leave it according to his will.

He did not think that he obtained the privilege of censuring the administration of his bishop. In his ordination each priest fully understood that obedience and respect to his bishop and his representatives became for him a duty both of justice and religion. I pray Thee, O God, to keep out of Thy Church those disobedient, fault-finding priests, who permit themselves to reverse the decisions of their judges, to discuss and criticize acts and ordinances of an authority which they can not respect too highly, and, abusing their right to govern a part of the flock, pretend to an exemption from strict obedience to the pastor of the entire body. They must not have considered the extent of the scandal they give and the harm they do the Church, when they thus destroy that beautiful unity which binds their bishop to the Pope, and which binds themselves to their prelate with the most sacred ties. Let them consider the words of St. Cyprian: *Scire debes episcopum esse in ecclesia et ecclesiam in episcopo; et si quis cum episcopo non sit non esse in ecclesia.*

Ah, Lord! how can priests find it difficult to obey after seeing that Thou obeyest them every day at the holy altar? Thou dost never resist their will, coming down from heaven into their very hands, going from their hands into their hearts, and into those of the faithful. Thou art at their disposal just as a servant under the control of his master, as goods under that of the owner. Can they refuse to submit to Thee, O my God? Can they oppose the government of Thy sovereign wisdom represented by those whom Thou hast appointed to guide them? And yet we rarely find those who after many years spent in the service of the altar will say as sincerely as St. Paul at the moment of his conversion: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Much larger is the number of those who, on account of their blindness and tepidity, ought rather to be asked what they want to be done to them. *Heu! plures habemus evangelici illius caeci, quam novi Apostoli imitatores . . ; sic profecto, sic multorum hodie pusillanimitas et perversitas exigit, ut ab eis quaeri oporteat: Quid vis ut faciam tibi? et non ipsi quaerant: Domine, quid me vis facere?* (St. Bern., Serm. 1 in convers. St. Paul.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Zeal for the glory of God induces a good priest to imitate the obedience of Jesus Christ. It was obedience which Wisdom incarnate chose as the means to regain the glory of God tarnished by man's rebellion. Consider how a God made man was obedient unto death on the cross. What a wonderful expiation

for the disobedience of man. Through this virtue I offer to God the most precious gift which I possess, the only thing which is in my power to return Him. He thereby receives from me a homage most pleasing to Him, who wishes to govern more as a Father than as a Sovereign.

Second Point.—Welfare of the Church, second motive for the priest to imitate the obedience of Jesus Christ. Respect for authority is the great power which Jesus Christ has placed in the hands of the Church. Such is the secret of all her successes. This is what makes her dreadful to hell. It should amaze us to notice how much this respect for authority has diminished in our day.

Third Point.—The solemn promise we made at our ordination, third motive for the priest to practise obedience faithfully. Every promise is binding, especially when made with sacred solemnity, and after mature deliberation. Go back in spirit to the day of your ordination. *Promittis? Promitto.* The question was precise, the answer clear, the promise absolute without a shadow of restriction. *Obedience, respect;* I have promised the one and the other.

MEDITATION XXXIX.

THE RICH FRUITS OF OBEDIENCE FOR A GOOD PRIEST.

1.—*Peace of Soul.*
2.—*Sanctification.*
3.—*Efficacy of Zeal.*

First Point.—Obedience a source of peace. The consecrating prelate guaranteed this blessing to me in the ceremony of my ordination. Hardly had I gladdened his heart by saying, *Promitto*—I promise obedience—than he leaned toward me his venerable head and gave me the kiss of peace, saying: *Pax Domini sit semper tecum.* This was as much as saying, Understand well how I will use my authority over you. If you fulfil your promise, nothing will prevent the most intimate union from existing between you and your bishop. Not only shall he be for you a friend and a father, but God, who gives His grace to the humble and peace to men of good will, God will bestow on you manifold favors; for there is no heart more humble than a heart perfectly submissive. There is no better will than one united to the will of God manifested in the command of superiors. There is no more plentiful source of peace of mind for an obedient priest than the

thought that he is where God wishes him to be. He fulfils His holy will. God has selected a position for him in which he can labor for God's glory and for his own welfare. This is the work He wants him to do; this is the field He wants him to cultivate. He may dread the sight of obstacles, and particularly the sight of his own incapacity. But the Lord can assist and enlighten him in his work. After all, He asks the work, not the success. From the moment the priest obeys, God takes all the burden upon Himself, for God can do all things, and the priest must depend on God. On the other hand, what a subject of trouble for the mind of him who remembers that the position he occupies is due to his own maneuvers. Let him consider if it be the will of God that he occupy his present position. Let him ponder over his schemes for preferment. Let him reflect how little good he can do without God's grace, and whether his ambition for place may not deprive him of this grace. Let us guard ourselves from this annoyance, and merit for ourselves the peace which accompanies submission to the will of God.

Second Point.—Obedience a powerful means of sanctification. Three things principally contribute to sanctity and lead us to perfection: innocence of life, virtues practised, and graces received. The man of faith feels an ardent love for obedience when he considers it under this three-fold aspect. He first loves obedience in the same degree as he loves the purity of his soul; for the spirit of submission destroys the first principle of all sins and vices, which is self-will. Sin is committed by refusal to do God's will or by forbidden acts. St. Bernard said, *Tolle propriam voluntatem et non erit infernum.* He says elsewhere, "Ah, who will give me one hundred masters in place of one; in this I would see no inconvenience, but an assistance. The more I am dependent, the less I shall be responsible." The position of superiors may be compared to an inclosure. This authority is not a prison that confines us, but a rampart which protects us. There is more beauty in obeying than in commanding. This was one of the maxims of St. Francis Xavier. Sin is often committed in the exercise of authority, but never in obedience for God's sake. Before the tribunal of the great Judge no excuse will be more readily accepted than the following: Thou didst teach me, O Lord, that Thou wast in the persons of my superiors, that in hearing them I was hearing Thee. I was afraid to displease Thee by the least resistance to their desires. St. John Climacus calls obedience, *Immediata ad Deum excusatio.* (Grad. iv. De obedientia, c. 1.)

Finally, obedience is a most powerful means of sanctification,

because it exercises a sort of empire over the Almighty, obtains of Him whatever we request. *Citius exauditur una obedientis oratio, quam decem millia contemptoris.* (St. Aug. De oper. Monach.) Generosity in obedience arouses God's liberality. O my God, when man gives Thee what is most dear to him, Thou certainly wilt not be outdone in generosity. Thou doest the will of those who fear Thee. (Ps. cxlvi. 19.) How much more readily wilt Thou do the will of those who love Thee! It follows that Our Saviour, by the example of obedience which He gives us, opens for us a sure and easy road to eminent perfection. Oh, how little I have followed Thee in this way, since I still remain so imperfect! Let us say in conclusion, with St. Augustine, that there is nothing of so great advantage for the soul as to obey. *Nihil tam expedit animae, quam obedire.* (In Ps. lxx. conc. 2.)

Third Point.—Obedience lends success to the labors of the priest. The Son of God saved the world through the practice of obedience. To obedience He is indebted for the name of Jesus, a name the sweetest, the most adorable of all names. "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death. . . . Therefore God also exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above every name." (Ph. ii. 8, 9.) It is also by obedience that we merit the honor to co-operate in the salvation of our brethren. Through obedience, indeed, we receive the inspiration of zeal from God Himself, the sanctifier of souls; we become docile instruments in His hands; He gives us His spirit and we communicate it to others.

An evidence of this truth we find in the Gospel. The disciples had spent one whole night in fishing, but had no success. Jesus Christ was not with them; in their work they had obeyed their will only. See how different the result when they begin again their labor in the name and by the command of Jesus Christ. "Master, we have labored the whole night, and caught nothing, . . . but in Thy word we shall let down the net; and when they had done this, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes." This incident explains the success of some priests inferior to others in talent; God rewards their humble submission. He imparts to them a marvelous power over the minds of men perverted by pride and disobedience. *Dum voluntatem suam aliis subjiciunt, ipsi lapsis per inobedientiam angelis dominantur.* (St. Greg. in L. iv. reg. c. iv.) In such priests we see the entire realization of the word of the Holy Ghost: "An obedient man shall speak of victory." (Prov. xxi. 28.) *Vincit enim mundum, diabolum, et seipsum.* (Pet. Bles.)

As a preparation for Mass I recall to mind all those powerful

motives to practise obedience, and I renew to Thee, O my God, the sacrifice of my will. I sacrifice it to Thy own, which I recognize in the will of my superiors. I appreciate the privilege of procuring Thy glory, consoling Thy Church, saving my brethren, securing my most sacred interests. I am bound, besides, by an obligation of justice, since I vowed obedience at the most solemn moment of my life. O Lord, I unite my submission to that of Thy Word Incarnate, the object of all Thy complacency. Let all my prayers be united to the prayer of Jesus in the garden: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." (Matt. xxvi. 39.) As an expression of my vows I adopt the prayer often addressed to Thee by one of Thy servants (St. Ignatius Loyola): *Fac mecum sicut scis et vis, scio enim quod amator sis.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Obedience a source of peace. As soon as I had made a promise of it at my ordination, I received the kiss of peace. What source of peace in the thought. I am where God wills me to be. I do what He commands. On the other hand, what motive of anxiety for a priest who occupies a position which he has sought. What good can I do to obtain the graces promised to such position in life? and can I expect these graces by my own selection of a place in the ministry?

Second Point.—Obedience a powerful means of sanctification. I. The spirit of submission destroys the primary cause of every sin, which is our own will. Sin is often committed in the exercise of authority, but never in obedience for God's sake. II. The spirit of submission controls pride, and by humility prepares the soul for all virtues; obedience being, as it were, their mother and guardian. III. It exercises an influence over God, and obtains from Him all that it asks. *Citius exauditur una obedientis oratio, quam decem millia contemptoris.*

Third Point.—Obedience gives success to the labors of the priest. The Son of God saved the world through this virtue. He owes to it His name, *Jesus.* The fishing remains fruitless as long as done by the will of man; it becomes abundant when commanded by the Saviour. *Vincit mundum, diabolum, et seipsum.*

MEDITATION XL.

THE KIND OF OBEDIENCE PRIESTS SHOULD HAVE IN ORDER TO IMITATE THAT OF JESUS CHRIST.

1.—*It should be Holy and Filial in its Motives.*
2.—*Prompt and Sincere in its Exercise.*
3.—*Universal in its Object.*

First Point.—Obedience should be holy and filial. A merely human motive never actuated the heart of Jesus when He obeyed poor human beings. He recognized in all of them the authority of God to which every will ought to submit. "Thou shouldst not have any power against Me, unless it were given thee from above." (Joan. xix. 11.) "It is written . . . that I should do Thy will." Lord I have willed. (Ps. xxxix. 8, 9.)

But this God whom alone He obeyed is a tenderly beloved Father: "Yea, Father, because it has so pleased Thee." (Matt. xi. 26.) "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has given Me commandment so do I. Arise, let us go hence." (Joan. xiv. 31.)

Let us give to our obedience these two qualities. Let it be holy and filial in its motives. God alone has a right to our obedience. Let us not lessen its value by placing it at the command of any mere human being. "Not serving to the eye, as it were pleasing men, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart." (Eph. vi. 6.) If we see God in the person of our superior, whoever he may be, we will receive his orders with respect, "with fear and trembling." (Ib. 5.) There shall never come out of our lips a word of complaint, murmuring, or blame, and far from seeming to censure his use of power, we will endeavor to justify him always, at least on the general principle that he, being placed on a higher level, is better able to judge what is conducive to the good or evil of the community which he governs, with the aid of divine grace.

To respect we should unite filial confidence inspired by love. The bishop is the father of our priestly life. *Reverendissime pater, postulat sancta mater Ecclesia.* Such were the first words addressed to the consecrating prelate on the day of my ordination. The kiss of peace which he gave me as soon as I had promised obedience told me in touching language, "Be a son to me, and I shall be to you a father; I will govern you by love, and you will

obey through love." Oh! how much is expressed in these few words! The bishop is the father, the priest is the son. Listen to the holy Doctors: *Esto subjectus pontifici tuo, et quasi animae parentem suscipe.* (St. Hier. ad Nep.) *Praepositum timeas ut dominum, diligas ut parentem.* (Ibid.) *Omnes sequimini episcopum, ut Christus Patrem* (St. Ig., Martyr). *Episcopus, ut membris suis, utitur clericis, et maxime ministris, qui sunt filii.* (St. Am. l, 2, off. c. 27.)

Second Point.—Obedience should be prompt and holy in its action. We do not read that Jesus Christ ever called in question His duty of submission. The earnestness with which He accomplished the will of His Father we see attested by everything that is written of Him. How did He begin His career? "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way." (Ps. xviii. 6.) And when the time came to close His sorrowful life, when He goes up to Jerusalem to endure the torments of His Passion, He shows haste, so that the apostles wondered. "And Jesus went before them, and they were astonished, and following were afraid." (Marc. x. 32.)

If in the persons of our superiors we see God, we will obey them with promptness mingled with joy, and we shall be careful not to deprive our sacrifice of its one merit and compensation. *Hilarem enim datorem diligit Deus.* Obedience delayed or opposed is a faded flower which has neither freshness nor perfume. How could such obedience be pleasing to God?

Let us take for our models the cherubim mentioned in the vision of Ezekiel. They had six wings, figurative of the promptness of their obedience, four faces looking to the four parts of the world. They did not wing their flight according to their own inclination, but according to the time and place pointed out by the Lord. They moreover stood up, moving the wings ready for flight, and willing to leave heaven, if necessary, to obey God. Blessed is the priest who uses the same promptness and simplicity in obeying his bishop, the vicegerent of Jesus Christ. He will deserve to hear the Saviour say of him one day in presenting him to His Father, "At the hearing of the ear he has obeyed Me." (Ps. xvii. 45.)

Third Point.—Obedience should be universal in its effects. Obedience extends to all times, to all places, all kinds of occupations, and excludes only that which is evidently sinful. The promise we made in presence of the altar at our ordination admits of no restriction. Let us not forget that our divine King obeyed for us unto death, and let us consequently be willing to sacrifice our judgment, nay, to expose our health itself for His sake. We are certainly permitted to enlighten those over us by respectful

remarks; when once decided, however, that we must devote our time and attention to this or that field of labor, to occupy this position or another, let us submit at once and begin work. "Thy perfect servant, O Lord," said St. Augustine, "is not he who seeks commands agreeable to his own notions, but he who studies to conform his will entirely to Thy will."

Is it unreasonable for a bishop to expect to find in his clergy for the many needs of his diocese the same devotedness, earnestness, and courage that military chiefs find in every emergency among their subordinates? If there is in the army a difficult position to hold or perilous undertaking, there is not an officer, not even a private, who would not risk his life. Soldiers will brave death itself at the first command, and this heroic obedience is a thing so common that men have almost ceased to admire it. What is the impelling power of this heroism? Duty, fidelity, honor. "And these indeed that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one." (1 Cor. ix. 25.)

O Jesus, I will, finally, imitate Thy obedience. Thou hast given me light; I thank Thee. When I shall feel a repugnance to obey, I shall represent Thee saying to me: *Quid magnum, si tu, qui pulvis es et nihil, propter Deum te homini subdis, quando ego, Omnipotens et Altissimus, qui cuncta creavi ex nihilo, me homini propter te humiliter subjeci?* (Im. lib. iii. c. 3.) I am afraid to lose Thy friendship if I withdraw from Thee by failing to practise a virtue which was dearer to Thee than life. *Qui se subtrahere nititur ab obedientia, ipse se subtrahit a gratia.* (Ibid.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Obedience holy and dutiful in its motive. Such was the obedience of Jesus Christ. In submitting Himself to poor human beings, He ever beheld in them the authority of God whom He adored, and of a Father whom He loved. Let our obedience have this two-fold character. If we see God in our superiors, we shall always accept their commands with respect, and shall execute them with filial confidence, loving almighty God in His representatives.

Second Point.—Obedience should be prompt and holy in its action. Considering the Lord in those who give us commands, we shall obey them with a promptness mingled with joy. An obedience which is wrested from me, rather than freely obtained, is like a faded flower. Blessed is the priest who will deserve to hear the Saviour say in presenting him to His Father: "He obeyed Me as soon as he heard My voice."

Third Point.—Obedience universal in its extent. It should extend to my actions, my will, my judgments, to my whole life, excluding that only which would evidently be sinful. True obedience does not exclude anything that is commanded, and is careful not to offer to God mutilated victims. This exclusion or division leaves a letter unfinished. This obedience is blind, and considers this blindness as wisdom. It listens to the voice of every superior, whatever may be his imperfections. A good priest wishes to be always like a child in the hands of obedience.

MEDITATION XLI.

PROGRESS OF THE PRIEST IN THE WAYS OF PERFECTION.

"And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men." (Luc. ii. 52.)

1.—*The Good Priest ever Advances in Grace before God.*
2.—*He ever Advances in Grace before Men.*

First Point.—Continuous progress of the priest in interior sanctity. This progress was only apparent in the person of Jesus Christ, for from the first moment of His incarnation He possessed all the treasures of knowledge, of wisdom, of infinite sanctity; in the priest, however, this progress ought to be real. With the imposition of hands we did not receive the plenitude of the heavenly gifts. Our sanctification should be the work of our whole life. The obligation of progress in perfection, "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," which concerns all Christians, applies more especially to the priest than to the layman. God does not require impossibilities, but by pointing out His own perfection as the end to which we should aim, and the only goal at which we may stop, He has plainly taught us that, in the matter of sanctification, one should never say, I have done *enough*. On the contrary we should ever aspire to something higher. "But be zealous for the better gifts." (1 Cor. xii. 31.) "Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before." (Phil. iii. 13.)

In a vocation like ours, not to aim at a higher perfection is a real defect. *Praefecti vel Antistitis vitium esse existimet, novas subinde virtutum accessiones non facere.* (St. Greg. Naz. Or. 1.) This hunger and thirst after justice, which, according to Our Saviour's promise, is to be satiated in eternal joys of heaven,

supposes an ardent desire of higher perfection and unceasing attempts to obtain this end. Let us be convinced that we retrograde the moment we are not willing to advance. *Nolle proficere, nonnisi deficere est.* (St. Bern. Ep. 254.) "The path of the just, as a shining light, goeth forward and increaseth, even to perfect day." (Prov. iv. 18.) The Wise Man says the holiness of the just should be increased continuously; certainly as much ought to be required of the priest, who is the guide and model of the just.

Thou lavishest upon me, O my God, divine graces without number, and amongst these, one alone, my daily communion, contains a powerful means of sanctification really infinite. Are all these graces granted to me to allow me to stand idle on the way to perfection? My gratitude ought to increase with each new blessing which I receive. Should not each one of Thy visits to me in communion diminish my imperfections, increase the life within myself, impress on my soul some more traits of resemblance to Thee, and efface from it more and more the image of the earthly Adam?

And now, what is my state? Could my progress in the ways of God, since the day of my ordination, be compared to the advance of the sun, which keeps on rising and increasing in light and heat, until it has reached noontide? If I consult my memory, if I compare the present with the past, shall I not have to acknowledge that I have to-day less innocence, less piety, less fervor, less zeal for the glory of God and the salvation of my brethren, than I had during the first days of my priesthood? O my soul, art Thou not the ungrateful vineyard of which the Lord complains because it has not responded to His cares and to His hopes? "He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes." (Is. v. 2.)

Second Point.—Progress of the priest in exterior holiness. As Jesus advanced in grace He unfolded gradually the infinite treasure of sanctity which was in Him. It shone more brightly on His countenance, in His deportment, in all His words and actions. His life was every day more and more conspicuous for acts redolent of modesty, prudence, humility, piety, and of charity toward men. Good priests strive to imitate these traits. They give greater edification to men, whilst they grow in virtue before God. Interior sanctity is the principle of exterior holiness. Both are so closely united that they are mutually essential; just as the odor can not exist without the perfume, or the perfume without the odor.

Examine yourself seriously, and accept gratefully the light which the Holy Ghost throws upon you. His graces are so much

the more useful that, whilst they enlighten, they do humble and mortify you. What serious progress have you made in those virtues of the good priest which contribute so powerfully to edify the people; patience, meekness, evenness and sweetness of temper. St. Gregory expresses the following desire: *Ut quisquis sacerdoti jungatur aeternae vitae sapore condiatur.* (Hom. xvii. in Evang.) Have you communicated this foretaste of heaven to all those with whom you have come in contact? O Lord, how many souls drawn by the sweet odor of Thy virtues I would have induced to follow Thee if I myself possessed them.

As a preparation for your Mass, acknowledge before Jesus Christ your deep unworthiness, since you possess so little sacerdotal holiness. What obstacles do you place to the merciful designs of God over you? How did you force Him to withhold from you the rich treasure of His heart, when He came to you precisely for the purpose of enriching your soul? Beg pardon of Him, and prepare yourself to gain more abundant favors from the holy sacrifice you are about to offer. In your thanksgiving beseech this generous friend to enable you henceforth to give Him glory by continuous progress in grace and holiness before Himself and before men. "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 16.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Continuous progress of the priest in interior holiness. The law which Jesus Christ imposes on all, "Be you perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect," concerns the priests more strictly than the laity. In a vocation like ours, not to aim continually at a higher perfection is a real deficiency. If the just should always be growing in holiness—"the path of the just goeth forward and increaseth"—can less be required of him who is the guide and model of the just? Am I at liberty to remain stationary in the way to perfection, after so many blessings that Thou showerest down upon me? What is my state?

Second Point.—Progress of the good priest in exterior holiness. Jesus Christ unfolded gradually the treasure of sanctity which was in Him. The good priest, after this example, whilst he grows in interior holiness, gives exteriorly greater edifications to men. Exterior holiness is the manifestation of interior sanctity. *Sic luceat lux vestra coram hominibus, ut videant opera vestra bona, et glorificent Patrem vestrum qui in coelis est.*

MEDITATION XLII.

WE SHOULD DO EVERYTHING WITH ALL POSSIBLE PERFECTION. THIS IS A GREAT MEANS TO ADVANCE RAPIDLY IN HOLINESS.

1.—*How did Jesus Christ Practise this Maxim?*

2.—*Reasons which Persuade us to Practise it Ourselves.*

First Point.—Jesus Christ performed all His actions with all possible perfection. Of Him alone it could be said in truth and at all times, as well when He worked with His own hands in the shop of St. Joseph as when He manifested His power and charity by miracles, "He did all things well."

He did everything with an infinite *sanctity*, both interior and exterior; never did the shadow of imperfection steal into any one of His actions, considered either in their substance or in their mode. At every moment, whatever might have been His occupation, He well deserved on earth, as well as in heaven, the praise of the angels. "Holy, holy, holy."

He did everything with an infinite *wisdom*, with an admirable order, seeking to carry out most minutely the will of His Father in the accomplishment of the duties of His state. As a child He spoke and acted with the perfect simplicity which becomes a child. He maintained the same principle in the different stages of His life. He likewise accommodated Himself to all circumstances, doing each thing at the proper time, in the proper manner. He was never known to work at the time of prayer, nor to pray at the time of work.

He did everything with an infinite *goodness*, referring everything to the glory of God, and to the welfare of man. He knew that in multiplying acts of adoration, of obedience, of self-abasement, etc., even in the most minute details of His life, He was fully repairing the honor of God tarnished by sin, augmenting the treasure of merits and graces which He prepared for men, and facilitating the salvation of their souls. Hence came that ardent and constant application to do all things well.

Ah! how rapidly we should advance in virtue, if we followed the principles which are here written down. Eliminate from even your most common actions every imperfection of which you are conscious, and perform them with a view of pleasing God; govern your heart, guide your hand; regulate your motives and acts on

the great precepts of the love of God and of our neighbor; recognize holiness where it really exists, viz., in our union with God by the accomplishment of His will in our situation in life. Do not run after an imaginary perfection. Do not seek perfection outside of the path which Christ has traced.

By each one of my actions, when well performed, I gain the favor of God. I increase my charity, strengthen my good inclinations, acquire a new grace, and greater capacity for good works. Thus good habits are formed, and are firmly rooted. For if evil calls for evil, good invites another good, and in this manner common actions and minor virtues lead on to the performing of heroic deeds, and to the acquisition of sublime virtues. If, however, I do not have this presence of mind and this control over myself which permit me to be the master and guide of my passions, and not their slave; if I have not this strong will born of a lively faith, without which my very best actions are full of defects, need I wonder that I am still so far from Thee, O my God, ever advancing toward the grave, without advancing a step in Thy love?

Second Point.—Motives which urge us to perform our most common actions as perfectly as we can.

I. *The will of God, His greatness, His sovereign dominion.* His will: "This is the will of God, your sanctification." (1 Thess. iv. 3.) Our sanctification and salvation depend on our own works. God will reward good eternally in heaven, and punish evil works eternally in hell. He wishes us to imitate as much as possible His own manner of acting, since He gives Himself to us as a model. "Be perfect as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Now, as St. Thomas writes: *Est mos Dei, quod omnia opera sua in summo bene facit.* He therefore commands us to excel in all our works, which supposes application to perform them well. "In all Thy works keep the pre-eminence." (Ecclus. xxxiii. 23.) His infinite greatness requires it. We show disrespect to a master by want of devotedness, by carelessness in his service, and God declares that He has naught but curses for those who "do His work deceitfully." (Jer. xlviii. 10.) Let us add that the dominion of God over us being universal, all our actions, small or great, should have Him for their object; all of them are acts of our dependence, and, as the Church says, they are offerings of our bondage to Him; consequently they should all be worthy of Him and render to Him all the glory due His greatness.

II. *Our love of Jesus Christ.* Nothing is more pleasing to Him than the performance of our actions with all possible perfection. We in this way resemble Him, we live His life, we accomplish His

most ardent desire, which is that we glorify His Father by our own deeds, as He glorified Him on earth by His actions. Thus both the head and the members may be entirely employed in promoting this divine glory. For this object He gives us His grace, He acts in us and with us. If my actions be in any way defective, Jesus Christ does not derive from His grace all the fruit He desired, nor from my co-operation all the joy which He expected.

III. *The excellence and value of an action which is well performed.* The supernatural and eternal order incomparably surpasses things within the sphere of nature and time. The least act of Christian virtue done by a just soul; the mere name of Jesus pronounced religiously; the sign of the cross made with attention—nay, one step, one look instigated by a good motive; all those acts, small indeed in themselves, but enhanced by faith and grace, which are the principle thereof, are more pleasing to God, procure to Him more glory, than all the purely natural actions of creatures, past, present, or to come. And what advantage shall we derive in the world to come from this holy action which lasted a moment only? St. Paul tells us "an eternal weight of glory." (2 Cor. iv. 17.) St Bernard says that our works are "seeds of eternity." (Sermo. 15, ad. cler.) As the tree and the fruits are inclosed in the seed, so in each good action there is inclosed either eternal glory or an increase of the same. O my God, can we love Thee, can we love ourselves, if the mere thought of this does not thrill us with joy; "on account of this action which I am about to perform, I shall see Thee more clearly, I shall love Thee more ardently; I shall possess Thee more intimately for all eternity."

Thanks be to Thee, O Lord, who hast placed my sanctification and salvation within my reach. There is no excuse for my irresolution. If I should pretend that the difficulty is too great, Thou mayest reply that this perfection is within my grasp. To obtain it I need not change my occupation; it suffices to do well whatever I do. In all circumstances I have to pray, to offer the holy sacrifice, to perform the functions of my office; I must have intercourse with the people; I must study, take my rest and nourishment, to keep up or repair my strength, etc. Since I must perform those actions, O my God, sad indeed would be my blindness, if, instead of by them seeking to please Thee, if, instead of laying up treasures for myself in heaven, I by my indifference neglect them. I thus deprive Thee of the glory, and myself of the happiness, which would have been their reward.

I shall in a few moments celebrate the most holy of mysteries, that is, accomplish an action of infinite greatness and sanctity. This sublime deed is made up of many acts apparently insignifi-

cant, such as motions of the hands, inclinations of the head, attitudes, looks and words. Angels will consider me during all the time of the sacrifice. Will they be able so say when I come down to the steps of the altar, *Bene omnia fecit?* How precious in that case would be the moments spent at Thy altar, O my God. How glorious the footprints they would leave in my life!

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ performed all His actions with all possible perfection. Of Him alone it could be said in truth, *Bene omnia fecit.* He did all things well—with an infinite *sanctity,* without a shadow of imperfection. With an infinite *wisdom* conforming always to the designs of His Father, to the duties of His present state. With an infinite *goodness,* referring all to the greater glory of God, and to our greater good. Should we not make rapid progress if we followed these principles? Regulate your affections, regulate your conduct, the interior, the exterior, on the great precept of the love of God and of our fellow beings, see holiness where it really is, viz., in the portion designated for us by Providence.

Second Point.—Motives which urge us to perform all our actions as perfectly as we can. The will of God. He wishes us to be saints, and our sanctification depends on our works. His infinite greatness. We show disrespect to a master by carelessness in his service, by want of devotion to his interests. Our love of Jesus Christ. Nothing pleases Him so much as our efforts to perform well our most common actions. In this we resemble Him, we live His life. The excellence of well-performed actions; the inestimable advantages to be derived. An everlasting crown of glory. Be Thou blessed, O Lord, for placing within my reach the perfection Thou dost expect of a priest.

MEDITATION XLIII.

ON GOOD INTENTION.

1.—*Its Power to Sanctify Our Actions.*
2.—*Its Qualities.*

First Point.—Good intention a powerful means of sanctifying our works. It raises them from the level of nature to the standard of grace. It exercises its influence over our actions whether they be good, bad, or indifferent. "Let us not do evil that there

may come good." (Rom. iii.) *Ea quae constat esse peccata.... nulla velut bona intentione facienda sunt.* (St. Aug. *contra mendacium.*) Good intention enhances the merit of our good actions. Now consider how many actions, not only good but even excellent, in the life of the priest. All of his occupations refer either to the glory of God or the salvation of the people; prayer, study, duties of the ministry. What a loss for me if, through neglect to sanctify my intention, I deprive myself of the merit of such works! How much sadder may it be, if they are the cause of God's displeasure. This would be the result of wrong intention; of laboring, for example, with no other view than to win worldly esteem. Without good intention, things excellent in themselves, such as ceremonies of the church, preaching, the care of souls, etc., would be nothing more than vain or even sinful actions. With a good intention, however, our ordinary actions assume a supernatural character.

A glass of water or two pennies are quite trifling, and yet if I give either to please God, He will be gratified and will accept the gift. He will even praise and reward it munificently. "The intention," says St. Augustine, "is the eye of the soul." The good intention is the essence of good actions. The ship follows the direction given by the rudder, and the work follows the end intended by us. The eye which is "single," of which Our Saviour speaks, which lights up all the body, is good intention, which casts its brilliancy over the whole body of our actions and makes them acceptable in the sight of the Lord.

St. Paul, on this account, makes to us this pressing exhortation: "Whatsoever you do, in word or in work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ." (Col. iii. 17.) The apostle invites us to elevate, to sanctify *everything* by a good intention. He excepts not one word, not one action. In another passage He goes so far as to mention the most ordinary actions necessitated by human nature. "Whether you eat or drink.... Do all things for the glory of God." (1 Cor. x. 31.) Now, if the intention has power to spiritualize, to raise to a supernatural order actions as material as eating and drinking, if it can in this way procure the glory of God and entitle us to His munificence, what power of sanctification must it not exercise on that multitude of actions so eminent which make up the day's work of the priest and of the pastor? Not only does the intention, animated by faith, impart great value to the good that we do, but it also adds to the treasure of our merits, the very good contemplated, but for valid reasons not accomplished.

How good a master Thou art, O my God! The ungrateful world

ignores, or does not wish to reward services. But Thou hast crowns for those who wish to serve Thee. Thine ear listens to the sighs and aspirations of Thy faithful servants, of Thy fervent priests. In Thy generosity Thou dost deign to consider as merits the many insults from which they wish to shield Thee, their desires to gain all hearts to Thee, although their labors may be otherwise fruitless and even barren. "Lord, all my desire is before Thee, and my groaning is not hidden from Thee." (Ps. xxxvii. 10.)

Second Point. — Qualities of good intention. I. The intention is *upright* when it considers God as the beginning and end of all things. When a priest in his daily conduct and in the discharge of his duties seeks God and His glory through the accomplishment of His will, he walks in the right path and can say in all truth, "My foot walked in the right way." (Ecclus. li. 20.) And he may add with the Saviour, "I go to the Father, I go to Him who sent me."

Follow the advice of a certain holy priest explaining the words of Jesus Christ to the apostles: "Cast the net on the right side of the ship and you shall find." (Joan. xxi. 6.) "Cast the net of your intentions on the side of *grace*, not on the side of nature. Take heed lest you attend to your work, to your business, to your visits, through natural motives. Let faith and grace guide your whole life to a heavenly, not to an earthly goal. Let the *temporal* never get the better of the *spiritual* interests. Live as a man of heaven who meddles with things of earth only through necessity. Cling to the cross, not to sensual pleasures, not even to interior consolations. Suffering is the lot of the elect. Rely on God, not on creatures; seek not to please men, do nothing through worldly considerations. Seek God, the salvation of souls, your progress in perfection; seek the glory of Jesus Christ; thereby you will find the plenitude of all good things, 'and you shall find.' But if you cast your net on the side of perishable goods, of worldly honor, you shall find nothing; for what can be found in nothingness?" (P. Nouet.)

II. The intention should be *pure*. We, indeed, seek God in zealous projects, works of charity, religious exercises. However, do we not also frequently seek vain-glory in their accomplishment? Where is the priest who, after first offering his intention to God, does not after seek self-satisfaction in a motive of vanity. As the eyes never look fixedly at more than one object at a time, so the soul should consider one perfect being only, viz., God.

The intention is pure if the heart be pure, for the heart directs the intention, just as the intention directs the action. It is my

heart, therefore, which I should mistrust in my designs, and in the motives of my actions. "Purify your hearts, ye double minded." (Jam. iv. 8.) That is, you whose hearts are divided by opposing intentions, whether they be spiritual or temporal. One can not serve two masters. Your heart is made for God alone. The least affection which is not borne for Him tarnishes the beauty of your soul. The pure gold of perfect charity can not tolerate that alloy. *All for God,* is the motto of a right intention. *All for God alone,* is that of the pure intention.

III. Good intention should be *persevering.* The object of every laudable undertaking deserves praise. It is useless to begin anything with spiritual and conclude it with worldly motives. Let us reflect before beginning an action; and let faith like a lamp enlighten us always, so that we may refer everything to God. Let us be equally watchful during the action itself that we may not lose sight of the intention. We have flights of holy inspiration; perseverance is sadly needed. God might often apply to us the language of St. Paul: "You did run well. What has hindered you?" You had commenced well what I had inspired you to do for My glory. Why did you not continue? The action was holy, the motive holier yet; in this manner you began, but in that which followed I have hardly anything to praise. The action continued to be good in itself, but I have been forgotten; it was not for Me, or at least not for Me alone, that it was performed.

Examine yourself seriously on this very important matter. If your pretended good works were stripped of all that had no other principle than natural love for business, habit, fancy; if they were held up to view blemished by the admixture of evil with good and by a lack of a good intention, how little genuine merit would be left you. What merits could you show to God, if on this very day He asked you an account of all your works?

Form your intentions with much care, purify them more and more, renew them frequently. Let this be your resolve and the object of your constant prayers, when you shall have received Jesus Christ in holy communion. As a preparation, unite your intentions to His, seek His will only, as He in everything sought the will of His Father. This, says St. Augustine, is the oil you must carry to the altar, so that your lamp, like those of the wise virgins, may always be lighted. *Ideo non deficiunt lampades, quia interiori oleo vegetantur; id est intentione bonae conscientiae, qua coram Deo fit in ejus gloriam, quidquid coram hominibus in bonis operibus lucet.* (Ep. 140.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Efficacy of a good intention to sanctify our works. It raises them from the level of nature and places them within the dominion of grace. It excludes evil deeds and exalts good actions. The intention is the eye of the soul, the good intention is the parent of good actions. Not only does it give a great value to our actions, but it also adds to the treasures of our merits the good contemplated but unaccomplished.

Second Point.—Qualities of a good intention. It should be upright, and it will be upright, if God alone be its object. We shall then be able to say with the Saviour, "I go to the Father." Each one of my actions draws me nearer to Him. Let us cast the net of our intentions on the side of *grace,* not on the side of nature; on the side of *heaven,* not on the side of the world. Let us cast our net near the *cross,* not near enjoyments, either sensual or spiritual; on the side of *God,* not on the side of creatures; do nothing through human considerations. Let our intention be pure. Let us seek God, and Him alone. *All for God* is the motto of an upright intention. *All for God alone* is the motto of the pure intention. Let the intention be *persevering;* the end crowns the work. Let us begin, continue, and end for God alone. Serious examination of myself. Resolution: "I shall glorify Thee, O Lord, through good intention. I will give Thee my heart, I will praise Thee with uprightness of heart."

SECTION FOURTH.

JESUS CHRIST, BY THE EXAMPLES OF HIS PUBLIC LIFE, ENABLES US TO PROCURE THE GLORY OF GOD AND TO SAVE SOULS.

PREAMBLE.

Jesus Christ in the first mysteries and the hidden part of His life has given us the model of all virtues which open heaven to the faithful. By following the examples which He has given us hitherto, we would become saints, and secure our salvation as Christians; but this will not suffice for those who are chosen to sanctify and save others. To accomplish this we must imitate Christ in His public life. Every good priest is an apostolic man, that is to say, a man dead to the world and to himself. He seeks nothing save the glory of God by the sanctification and salvation of souls. Henceforth the noble end of our efforts will be to impart to our brethren holiness drawn from its very source, which is the heart of the Son of God.

Before following Christ in His new and public career, wherein so many heroic souls have preceded us, and to kindle in us the first sparks of sacerdotal zeal, we will make the meditation known in the Exercises of St. Ignatius as the meditation of the "Two Standards." This is a parable which places before our eyes the great contest going on between good and evil, and shows it to us, as it were, personified in its two chiefs, Jesus Christ and Lucifer.

MEDITATION XLIV.

THE TWO STANDARDS. INVITATION TO APOSTOLIC LIFE.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself two vast plains. In the one, near Babylon, Lucifer assembles all the sinners, but those in particular who can aid him in his designs of death. In the other, near Jerusalem, Jesus Christ gathers around Him the

just and all His fellow workers in the plan of mercy which brought Him down from heaven. This work is to impart true life to man.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to discover the machinations and to frustrate the efforts of Lucifer, and to understand and assist Jesus Christ in His zeal.

First Point.—Standard of Lucifer. I. Imagine that you see the prince of the reprobate in the vast plains of Babylon, seated on a throne of fire, surrounded by a whirlwind of flame and smoke. The hideousness of his features and his terrific looks spread terror and dismay.

Understand the meaning of these figures. The vast plains signify the wide roads in which sinners walk. Babylon, which means a city of confusion, gives some idea of the torment of a guilty conscience.

The throne of fire is the symbol of pride and passion, which gnaw the souls of the wicked. The smoke pictures the sinner's blindness, and the vanity of his enjoyments. The hideous features, the terrifying look of Lucifer signify the hideousness of sin, and the influence of the wicked spirit over souls. This active influence becomes visible in the terrible agitation, disquietude, sadness, and I know not what secret repulsive expression depicted on their countenances.

II. Behold the standard of Lucifer. You will read on it three words which will teach you the means he employs to pervert and destroy men: riches, pleasures, honors. Consider the countless multitude of followers and co-operators who surround this dreadful chief; all those bad angels cast out of heaven with him because they followed him in his revolt. For these fallen spirits evil is now a second nature. Consider all the men who become the slaves of passions and sin. Notice in particular that *corps d'élite* in the army of Satan, all those authors and propagators of irreligious and immoral doctrines, all those scandalous men who make a trade of destroying souls. What is the object of this appalling assemblage? What does the enemy of God and of men wish to do? He wishes to induce the whole human race to offend its Creator, and after its fall he intends to drag it into the eternal abyss.

III. Hear Lucifer: he excites and inflames the rage of his aides. He sends them through the whole world; he commands that no province, no city, no hamlet, no palace, no cottage, must remain free from their attacks; they must spare no condition, no age, no person. He teaches them the arts of destroying souls. "Riches, pleasures, honors. Hold up continually this three-fold enticement to the three passions whose germ is in the hearts of all men. Deceive,

point out the way strewn with flowers; say nothing of the abyss to which it leads."

IV. Consider with what obedience, what promptness, whatdevotion the ministers of Satan execute his orders; how active they are in their infernal mission; how cunning and perfidious in laying their snares. See with what constancy and rage they pursue the work of destroying souls! They use everything to aid them in their murderous designs, books, works, songs, errors of the mind, evil inclinations of the heart. Consider, finally, the lamentable success of Lucifer. He appeals to all the passions, and all the passions respond to his appeal. Can we not say with too much truth: "Behold the whole world goes after him." (Joan. xii. 19.) Where are they who always resist the concupiscence of the flesh, concupiscence of the eyes, the pride of life? Moreover, there are very many, alas! who, after being seduced, become seducers themselves? Hence hell opens wide its jaws. Oh, how many there are who fall into the frighful abyss at every moment; and yet hell is everlasting. Will you remain unmoved at the frightful spectacle?

Second Point.—Standard of Jesus Christ. I. Represent to yourself a beautiful plain near Jerusalem; and there, not on a throne, but surrounded by His subjects, like a father surrounded by his children, see the real chief and sovereign of all men, Jesus Christ our Lord. In seeing Him, they are irresistibly drawn to Him by the celestial mildness of His features, and the charm of His countenance.

As in the first point, consider here the hidden meaning of these figures. This beautiful plain is the way of the just, rough in appearance, but in reality full of comfort. Jerusalem, city of saints, vision of peace, is the symbol of a conscience pure, tranquil, and confident. Our Lord is without a throne, undistinguished from His subjects, to express the humility and simplicity of His character. His aspect is amiable, as the prophets had predicted. "Beautiful above the sons of men." (Ps. xliv. 3.) He instils gentle peace into the hearts of those who approach Him. "His conversation has no bitterness, . . . but joy and gladness." (Sap. viii. 16.) He is the reflection of the beauty of virtue and of the operations of the Holy Ghost in souls; it produces confidence, joy, true happiness.

II. Consider the standard of salvation which Jesus Christ opposes to that of Lucifer. It bears as mottos: poverty, humiliation, suffering. Behold the spirit of the holy militia; it is by these means that men shall be saved. Admire the august assembly gathered around the divine King; all true disciples of God incarnate. The saints of all ages, the apostles, and all those who are called

to the sublime vocation of saving souls. Amongst them there is not one slave of those vices which disgrace humanity. In this army all virtues are practised to a heroic degree. What is the design of the Saviour in calling together His fellow workers and friends? This design is the most noble, the most generous which can be imagined. He intends to induce all mankind to labor for the end for which they were created, and thereby to procure for it the happiness of this life and of eternity.

III. Hear Him when He sends His apostles and ministers to frustrate the designs of Lucifer, and to carry out His own end: "I came to send fire on earth, and what will I but that it be kindled? I came that they may have life. The Son of man came to seek and to save what was lost. Going into the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever that I have commanded you. As the Father has sent Me, so do I send you. Behold I am with you all the days until the consummation of the world." Go, continue My work of redemption. If you love Me, save souls which are dear to me. You shall save them by disengaging them from the love of riches, of pleasures, of honors, and inspiring them with love for poverty, sufferings, and contempt.

IV. See the apostles and the heirs of their zeal in all ages; with what ardor they begin, with what perseverance they pursue the work of mercy intrusted to them! Recall to mind all the fatigues, persecutions, sufferings of their ministry. How glorious the victories they gained over hell! How many souls that are indebted to them for having escaped eternal torments, who in heaven will proclaim that to them next to God they owe the supreme felicity they enjoy! You fight under the same standard; you have, to encourage you, the same motives which kindled the zeal of so many holy priests, who, for eighteen hundred years, signalized their courage in this sacred warfare. Do you deserve that they should acknowledge you as one of their companions in arms? Ah, if Jesus Christ had not found in His other ministers a more hearty co-operation than our own has been hitherto, how narrow would be the limits of His kingdom! Where would the elect be if Lucifer had none but priests like ourselves to oppose his designs on the souls of men? Let us blush for shame and humble ourselves, for having honored our divine chief so imperfectly and so feebly co-operated in His plans.

Renew in yourself the sentiments of an apostle: there is nothing so proper to revive them as a fervent reception of the Sacrament of our altars. After your communion listen to Our Lord saying to you as to St. Peter: "Lovest thou Me? Feed My sheep."

After eating this adorable flesh and drinking the divine blood, we should be "like unto lions breathing out fire"; the charity of Jesus Christ should inflame and urge us on; we should cause hell to tremble. *Tanquam leones ignem spirantes . . . , ab illa mensa recedamus, facti diabolo terribiles.* (St. Chrys. hom. lxi. ad popu. Ant.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The standard of Lucifer. Let us imagine that we see Satan in the vast plains of Babylon, on a throne of fire, spreading dismay around him by his hideousness and his appalling aspect. Consider his standard on which are written the mottos—pleasures, riches, honors. What a multitude eagerly pressing around this horrible chieftain! Wicked angels who are now demons, men of crime and scandal. Why has he called them together? What does he say to them to arouse their wrath? What does he teach them to do to destroy souls? In what manner do they execute his orders? With what success? "The whole world walks after him;" hell is filling up fast. Can we remain indifferent at this spectacle?

Second Point.—The standard of Jesus Christ. Imagine that you see the Saviour in a pleasant plain near Jerusalem. He is not on a throne, but standing as a father among His children. They feel drawn toward Him by the charm of His countenance, and the mildness of His looks. Inscribed on the banner are the words: poverty, humiliation, suffering. By these virtues it is that men are saved. Whom does He call around Him? What does He expect from their zeal? Go through the whole world. Save them by teaching the truth, as Satan destroys them by deceiving them. With what ardor apostolic men labor in their mission! How many victories they gain over hell! You fight under the same standard. What will you do henceforth? What have you done heretofore?

MEDITATION XLV.

DEVELOPMENT AND APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE OF THE TWO STANDARDS.

1.—*The Parable Stimulates our Bravery to Fight for Jesus Christ, and to Win Souls for Him.*

2.—*It Teaches Us how to Develop Successfully the Plans of Jesus Christ.*

First Point.—In this parable everything should excite our zeal for the salvation of souls. The hatred which Lucifer bears them, his own and his associates' efforts to destroy them; the love of Jesus Christ for them, and His labors to save them; the excellence of this apostolic life, and its real advantages.

I. We know why Lucifer, the implacable enemy of souls, crushed under the hand of the Almighty, not able to revenge himself on Him, beholds in our souls the image of God, and vents upon us his bitterness and anger. He can not forgive us the undeserved blessings which God has poured down upon us, the glory prepared for us, the joy which our salvation affords Our Creator. Satan hates God in man. To his hatred are due so many perfidious schemes or violent efforts to make us participate in his rebellion and sharers in his misfortune. The Scripture represents him sometimes like a wily serpent, sometimes like a roaring lion, seeking and planning the destruction of the children of men. For this purpose the devil tries to find abettors among men. There are men who give scandal. He goads them on with an unholy ambition to forward his murderous designs! Alas! why does he often find in his minions more docility and energy than Jesus Christ meets with in His ministers? How many long nights they spend! How many privations they will endure to capture souls! Are there not some among those ministers of Satan who ruin their health and shorten their days by excess of work in propagating amongst persons of all ages and conditions infidelity and corruption? They never take any rest, they are never satisfied with the evil they have done. Do they ever say: It is enough! we have cast enough souls into the place of torments; we have robbed enough souls of virtue, of peace, of hope itself? Alas, no! Nothing appeases their fury, nothing exhausts their patience, nothing abates their sacrilegious ardor.

How dreadful the havoc they wage in the flock of Jesus Christ!

Consider what becomes of innocence, and of so many hearts that are good and pure. Who could count up in parishes, in families, the number of those who perish? We know what hell is; we have meditated upon the subject. Shall we remain impassive witnesses of the misfortune of our brethren? *Cadit asina, et est qui sublevet eam; perit anima, et nemo est qui reputet.* (St. Bern. de cons. l. iv. c. vi.) Consider that instead of one soul thousands are being lost. Will we not do something to save at least a few of them?

II. These souls are dear to Jesus Christ. The object of all the mysteries of His life was to glorify God by the salvation of souls —examples, lessons, miracles, sufferings, His life, and His death— He devoted all to their salvation. See Him worn out with fatigue sitting at the well of Jacob. What does He do there? He expects a soul which He is about to save. See His cross, a divine balance which determines so exactly the value of souls, for their value is equal to what they cost Him. Hear Him complaining that His blood has been spilt unprofitably. Have not you been, in part at least, the cause of this? "What profit is there in My blood?" Who profits by My sorrows, by all My sacrifices? "Did I labor in vain, consume My strength without cause?" (Is. xlix. 4.) I lived in poverty, in vigils and in tears. I died amidst reproaches and the most cruel tortures. All were accepted or offered for the redemption of souls, and they are lost! With a little zeal you could save many of them, and you prefer to remain idle? Your own self I have delivered from hell, by inspiring others to stretch to you a saving hand—through gratitude, at least, help your brethren, have compassion on them in their dangers; remain not unconcerned in contemplating the misfortune of those whom I love. Save, do save My souls, or cease to call Me your Lord and Master. "I know you not now."

Those ardent desires of the heart of Jesus Christ were ever understood by good priests. Hardly did the apostles receive their mission than they divided the world amongst themselves, and went over the whole of it as so many fearless conquerors. The love of Christ urges them on; a sacred fire which they can not quench consumes their hearts. "They manifest themselves to the world as the ministers of God, in much patience, in tribulation, in necessities, in distresses, in strifes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, . . . by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report." (2 Cor. vi. 4, 5, 8.)

They everywhere preach the doctrine of salvation, snatch countless souls from hell, multiply the number of the elect. Their zeal has found imitators in all ages.

III. What is the excellence and advantage of this apostolic

life? "They can not," says St. Charles Borromeo, "imagine anything on earth more sublime than co-operating with God in the great work of redemption. Since we perform the same functions as Jesus Christ, when we labor for the conversion of souls, it is evident that nothing can be found more pleasing to God, nor more glorious to ourselves." St. Denis says more: *Divionrum omnium divinissimum, est co-operari Deo in salutem animarum.* (De celest. Hier. c. v.)

The result of sacerdotal zeal extends to the whole world, which owes to it the blessing of Christianity. It considers the souls which are its object, examines the benefits conferred, thinks of heaven, which it opens to them, and of hell, from which it delivers them. See how the priest himself profits by the exercise of his zeal. If a glass of cold water given to the poor will not be without reward, how great must be the hope of the zealous pastor, who through the preaching of the Gospel shall have begotten souls to Jesus Christ, and shall have sanctified them in His blood through the administration of the sacraments! Glorious titles and bright crowns shall be distributed to those who shall have visited the captives, fed the hungry, clothed the naked; how high then in the kingdom of heaven shall be the rank of those who shall have freed immortal souls from the slavery of the devil, clothed them with the precious garb of grace, nourished them with the word of God and with the very body of Jesus Christ. When a good priest ponders over this subject, he feels, as it were, electrified, inflamed with an ardent desire to save souls. His sole anxiety is for the means of success in the work.

Second Point.—How shall we be able to gain many souls to God? We find the answer in the parable. To deceive is the work of Satan—he is prince of darkness; to enlighten is the weapon of the Saviour—He is "the light of the world." Go, He says to His ministers, place the bright light of truth before the eyes of all. Undeceive men concerning the false glitter of earthly things. Show them the emptiness of human grandeurs and of material enjoyments which they covet, make them dread riches, honors, pleasures, as so many poisonous substances which destroy souls; urge them to take for their model a God incarnate, poor, humble, suffering; for this is the only one way that leads to life everlasting. But how, O Lord, shall we make ourselves heard? How shall we be able to convince men, if we preach this doctrine in a world which hates it? The way to succeed is to practise yourselves what you will teach, always to follow My example more than you will require others to do. Your hearts, therefore, should be disengaged from riches, pleasures, honors. This will not suffice, I

did much more than this. I cherished poverty, suffering, contempt, horror for the world and its maxims. This is the principal manner in which apostolic men imitated Me; it is the infallible means to produce happy results in the souls of men.

Let us, therefore, be imbued with the spirit of the Saviour's holy militia, let us make use of the arms He left in our hands, the love of poverty, of sufferings, of contempt. A lawful strife alone can secure for us a right to the crown of victory. "He that striveth for the mastery is not crowned, except he strive lawfully." (2 Tim. ii. 5.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The parable of the two standards excites our zeal for the salvation of souls. By the consideration of three motives: I. The hatred which Lucifer bears them. Not being able to revenge himself upon God, he takes revenge on man, who is the image of God and the object of His love. It is God that he hates in us. He does everything to destroy our souls. II. The love of Jesus Christ. Christ became man for our souls. Let us look at His cross, let us hear Him complaining of the unprofitableness of His sufferings, and expressing to us the ardent desires of His heart. Good priests have ever understood them. III. The excellence of the apostolic life. *Divinorum omnium divinissimum, est co-operari Deo in salutem animarum.* How useful it is to the priest himself and to the whole world!

Second Point.—The parable of the two standards teaches us how we may be enabled to gain many souls to God. To deceive is the weapon of the devil, to enlighten is the sword of the Saviour. Let us undeceive men, enlighten them by word and good example.

MEDITATION XLVI.

REPETITION OF THE PRECEDING MEDITATIONS. SUMMARY OF MOTIVES OF ZEAL FOR THE SALVATION OF SOULS. THEY ARE COMPRISED IN THREE POINTS.

1.—*Motive of Glory.*
2.—*Motive of Charity.*
3.—*Motive of Self-interest.*

First Point.—Motives of glory should excite our zeal for the salvation of souls. Zeal has ever been the distinctive character of all the great men whose mission was to confer benefit upon mankind. Moses offers himself to God as a victim to obtain forgiveness for his people. "Either forgive them this trespass, or if Thou dost not, strike me out of the book that Thou hast written." (Ex. xxxi. 31, 32.) Under the New Law St. Paul expresses the sentiments of the other apostles as well as his own, when he exclaims: "Who is weak, and I am not weak; who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) "I most gladly will spend and be spent myself for your souls." (Ib. xii. 15.) This same ardent zeal, this same love of self-sacrifice for the good of souls, we find not merely in that long series of holy pontiffs who succeeded the apostles, but also in all the holy priests with whom they shared the cares of this pastoral charge. Think of a St. Dominic, a St. Francis of Assisi, a Vincent Ferrer, a Vincent of Paul, Anthony of Padua, Ignatius of Loyola, Xavier, Regis, Brydaine, Olier. Think of their lives! In our own days and living among us there are many examples well suited to excite our zeal. There are also many striking instances of zeal in lay persons. Zeal for souls allies me to the most distinguished personages in the world, and even exalts me to association with the angels. "They are all ministering spirits, sent to minister to those who will receive the inheritance of salvation." (Heb. i. 14.) It associates me with God Himself. "We are God's associates." (1 Cor. iii. 9.) *Zelus Dei vita est.* (St. Amb.)

II. Which is the work in which the Almighty deigns to ask my co-operation? It is the grand and eternal object of God the Father's thought. "Let us make man to our own image and likeness," let us create him for holiness and happiness. It is the complement of all the labors, sufferings, and death of God the Son. It is the proof of the operations of the Holy Ghost

in the Church until the end of time. O priest of God, He who without you created the world can not save it without you! Jesus has entrusted to your keeping the infinite treasure of His graces and merits, has commissioned you to pour out its wealth upon souls. The Holy Ghost has chosen you to be His instrument and oracle. By your means He wishes to sanctify and lead man to eternal happiness. How sublime the office! "I know not," says Richard of St. Victor, "if any man can on earth receive a higher favor than to be called to change wicked men" into just men, slaves of Satan into children of God. Can even the raising of the dead to life be called a more wonderful work? How could it be so? Surely to raise up a soul that will live forever is a work more excellent than to restore life to flesh which must die again.

Second Point.—A motive of charity should excite our zeal for the salvation of souls.

I. God's charity to the souls of men is most tender and excessive. "Lord who lovest souls." (Wisdom xi. 27.) "God for His infinite charity wherewith He loved us." (Eph. ii. 4.) How powerfully Bethlehem, Calvary, and the altar teach this truth! Among all the proofs of our love which we can offer to God, there is none more pleasing to Him than devotedness to the sanctification of souls. "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" I ask it a second and a third time. Jesus was not ignorant of St. Peter's sentiments when He saddened him by seeming to doubt his fidelity. You love Me, O Peter, I know it; but you must give to Me and to yourself an unquestionable guarantee of that love. What will be the guarantee? You may shed tears for your sin, sleep on the hard ground for penance. But, my dear apostle, learn the generosity of My heart. I entrust to you the care of My lambs and of My sheep; and set aside all uneasiness. You can not grant me a surer pledge of your love. Whence St. Cyril said: *Ex hoc loco agnoscunt fidei magistri non aliter se Summo Pastori gratos fore, quam si omni studio cavcant ut rationales oves curentur.* And St. Lawrence Justinian: *Nihil tam Deo gratum acceptumque est, quam pro viribus operam dare ut homines reddantur meliores.* And St. Gregory the Great: *Nullum omnipotenti Deo tale est sacrificium, quale est zelus animarum. Ille apud Deum in amore magis dives est, qui ad ejus amorem plurimos trahit.* Finally, St. John Chrysostom: *Nihil adeo declarat quis sit fidelis amans Christi, quam si fratrum curam agat proque illorum salute gerat sollicitudinem. Hoc maximum amicitiae erga Christum argumentum.*

II. Charity to our neighbor. Sympathy is its first fruit.

Nothing can excite our sympathy more than the sight of the crimes and sufferings of so many unfortunate people who drag out

an existence in ignorance of the all-important object of their lives or in complete indifference. This very knowledge increases their responsibility and misfortune. Whither will their blindness and rashness lead them? They are asleep on the brink of a frightful abyss. If called upon to give our lives to save them, we would simply be accomplishing the duty of a good shepherd. "The good shepherd gives his life for his sheep." (Joan. x. 11.) What is required in most instances? A little patience in instructing people, humility in forgetting injuries or insults, a wholesome advice, an urgent exhortation, a good word said in the proper time, an act of kindness. Alas! this is too much to ask of him who has allowed zeal and charity to escape from his heart. He looks with indifference on the destruction of his brethren for whom Jesus Christ shed His blood.

Third Point.—Our own interest requires our zeal for the salvation of others. God places before us water and fire, life and death, the most glorious reward, the most terrible punishment. The choice lies with ourselves. Without zeal we are lost. The hell of the bad priest shall be our dwelling. For without zeal we are without love. "*Qui non zelat, non amat.*" (St. Aug.) "And he who loveth not, is already dead." (1 Joan. iv. 14.) But, if we are really zealous, there is no blessing in life, no consolation at death, no glory in the world to come to which we can not lay claim.

I. "By being merciful we are sure to obtain mercy." (Matt. v. 7.) In sacerdotal zeal we practise mercy in the most excellent manner, for as much as the soul is above the body, heaven above earth, the good and evil of eternity above the good and ills of this short life, so much is charity, which seeks the salvation of souls, superior to that which has no direct object but to relieve temporal ills. The promises made for the bestowal of alms apply with even greater reason to zeal for salvation of souls. "It delivers from death, purges away sin, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting." (Tob. xii. 9.) "It resisteth sins." (Eccle. iii. 3.) These last words are full of consolation. The voice of my sins reproaches me, but it is stifled by the echo of my zeal speaking and praying for me. This is an excellent means to calm the troubles of mind aroused by the remembrance of my sins. "Charity covereth a multitude of sins." (1 Pet. i. 8.) Zeal discharges the debt I owe the justice of God, and makes God Himself my debtor, on account of the rich treasures which I deposit in His hands. Is there a life more meritorious, more replete with good works than that which is spent in the labors and trials connected with works of zeal?

II. How sweet it is to die when one has led the life of an apostle, of a zealous pastor. "Going they went and wept casting their seeds, but coming they shall come with joyfulness carrying their sheaves." (Ps. cxxv. 6.) To the good priest on his death-bed can be applied the words of the prophet: "He will sit in wealthy rest." (Is. xxxii. 18.) Zeal in procuring the salvation of souls is one of the certain marks of our predestination. Speaking of those who helped him in his apostolic labors, St. Paul declares that their names are written in the Book of Life, and what was the ground of his hope against the great judgment day, when every man shall be rewarded according to his works? The conquests he had made for Christ were the ground of his hope. "For what is our hope, our joy, our crown of glory? Are not you in the presence of Our Lord Jesus Christ in His coming?" (1 Thess. ii. 19.)

Is there only one crown prepared for the zealous priest in heaven? St. Gregory answers: *Tot coronas sibi multiplicat, quo Deo animas lucrifacit.* (Past. iii. p.)

To his own happiness he will add the happiness of all the souls to whose salvation he shall have contributed. He shall be conspicuous among the princes of the heavenly kingdom. "He who shall do and teach shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 19.) Compare the splendor of the fixed stars with that of the firmament, and you shall form an idea of the glorious distinction reserved for holy priests in blessed eternity. "They that are learned shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that instruct many to justice, as stars for all eternity." (Dan. xii. 3.) Let us love God, let us love our neighbor, let us love ourselves wisely, and we shall never refuse a sacrifice when there will be question of the salvation of souls.

Go to the altar, there to drink in zeal at its very source. From the heart of Jesus it is that those sparks of sacred fire shoot out which inflame the souls of apostolic men. Offer yourself willingly to the Shepherd of shepherds, to go in search of the lost sheep. "Behold here I am, send me." During your thanksgiving, if you are perfectly recollected, you shall hear the Saviour asking your co-operation in His designs of mercy. "I come to cast fire on earth, and what do I will but that it may be kindled." Give yourself to Him, and be ready when occasion occurs to co-operate with Him in the salvation of souls.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Motive of glory. Consider with whom zeal for the salvation of souls allies us—with the most deserving men that

ever lived, with the angels, with God Himself, of whom we become the co-operators. What is the nature of the work? The salvation of the souls of men, the grand object of the thoughts of God the Father, of the sufferings of God the Son, of the operations of God the Holy Ghost.

Second Point.—Motive of charity. Toward God. He loves souls so tenderly! Nothing pleases Him so much as zeal for the salvation of souls. "Lovest thou Me? Feed My lambs, feed My sheep." Toward our neighbor. If we love men, how can we remain unmoved at the sight of the misfortune of so many souls which could be led to the possession of God, the sovereign Good.

Third Point.—Motive of self-interest. There are no heavenly blessings in life, no consolation at death, no glory in eternity that we may not claim if we are zealous for the salvation of souls.

MEDITATION XLVII.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS CHRIST. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate those Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—The Son of God is about to leave His retreat and to begin His public life. He goes from Nazareth to the Jordan, and there mingles with the sinners who are baptized by St. John. The precursor, through humility, refuses to baptize Jesus, and afterward consents through obedience. After the ceremony the Holy Ghost descends visibly upon the Saviour, and God the Father proclaims Him His Son.

Second Prelude.—Imagine that you see the banks of the Jordan, and the large assembly of people that come to receive the baptism of penance, drawn by the preaching and examples of John the Baptist.

Third Prelude.—Beg of God to understand this mystery and to cherish and practise the truths it contains. It concerns especially evangelical laborers.

First Point.—Contemplate those concerned. At Nazareth consider the most holy Virgin swayed alternately by sadness and joy, on account of the departure of her Son. She is now deprived of His presence, but the work of redemption shall be accomplished; God shall receive glory; men shall be saved. When shall I know how to stifle the voice of nature, whenever the voice of religion

and charity is heard? On the banks of the river see that multitude gathered hastily from all parts of Judea, as much to see the precursor as to hear his preaching. Their minds are enlightened, their hearts are touched. Great numbers ask for baptism. Consider the wonderful effect of the holiness of the preacher. See John the Baptist. The pallor of his face, his air of profound conviction of the truths he announces, his dress, his life, will explain to you the success of his labors. Behold Jesus Christ, adore Him; it is certainly astonishing to see the Holy of holies in a crowd of sinners. Ask of Him what sins He comes to atone for. Excite yourself to sorrow for your own transgressions. In heaven all the angels are in admiration, beholding the humility and gentleness of their divine King. God the Father looks down and prepares to honor His Son in proportion to the humiliations He accepts to please Him.

Second Point.—Hear the words. In these words, says St. Bonaventure, did the Saviour address His Mother when He bade her farewell: "The time has come for Me to rise, to go on to glorify My Father, and to make Him known; the time has come for Me to make Myself known to the world, to work out the salvation of men for which My Father sent Me on earth. Fear not, My good Mother, I shall soon return." Look into the heart of St. John the Baptist, try to realize his sentiments when he recognizes Jesus Christ. A reverential fear enters his mind; he says to Christ: "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" Endeavor particularly to understand the answer given him: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." (Matt. iii. 15.) Since thou knowest who I am, "suffer it," do not oppose My designs. This is not yet the time to receive glory, it is the time to suffer humiliation. "Suffer now." "It becometh us to fulfil all justice"; I, by receiving, and thou by giving Me baptism. It becomes *us* who instruct others to give them good examples in everything. Let us humble ourselves. The perfection of humility is the perfection of justice; the humble man respects every one's rights. He gives honor to God, and keeps abjection for himself. Give all your attention to the voice which comes down from heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." "Son of God," the "eternal object of His complacency!" All the glory of Jesus Christ, all His perfections are comprised in these words. When will you give to Him what you owe Him as the beloved Son of the Father?

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus eagerly begins the work laid out for Him by the will of heaven. He bids farewell to Mary, who is desolate, though resigned, and according to St. Bona-

venture, He, the great master of humility, bends down His knee and asks the blessing of His Mother. He walks on, all alone, for as yet He has no disciples. Accompany Him in spirit. Is He not the King of kings? Then where is His cortège? He has in His kingdom millions of angels to serve Him. But His kingdom is not of this world. He has taken the form of a servant, not the form of a monarch. O children of men, why do you ever prefer vanity to truth, that which is temporal and uncertain to that which is certain and eternal? Why do you prefer time to eternity?

Jesus arrives on the banks of the Jordan. He wishes to be baptized by St. John, who begins to plead excuses. What! will the head of a God bow under the hand of a mortal? Promotion to high places causes fear to the humble, as much and more than humiliation causes anxiety to the proud. The difference is this, that the former are pleased with their confusion, because it is an act of virtue, but the others are annoyed because they have yielded to a passion. Obedience puts an end to this contest of humility. Jesus orders and John no longer resists. There is sometimes more solid virtue in accepting an honor than in seeking a slight. A man will speak ill of himself, and would be very sorry to know that others believed what he said.

Jesus goes into the river—behold a new prodigy of self-debasement. Heretofore He has lived as an obscure citizen and as a person of no consequence; to-day He wishes to be considered a sinner; it was indeed for sinners that John preached penance, it was sinners whom he baptized. Who would have taken Jesus for the Saviour of the world in seeing Him in this position? Would any one have suspected Him to be the Creator of the universe, the God of all majesty and sanctity? As He was about to begin preaching the Gospel of salvation, ought he not to have feared lest men would despise Him as a sinner? To this consideration He pays no attention.

"He who humbles himself shall be exalted:" Heaven has spoken. It glorifies this humble penitent whilst he prays. "Jesus being baptized and praying, the heaven was opened." (Luc. iii. 21.) God acknowledges Him to be His Son, and proclaims that far from being a sinner, He is the object of all His complacencies. The Holy Ghost comes down upon Him in the shape of a dove. He is now recommended not only to the attention, but also to the adoration of men; the success of His preaching has been prepared by His humility.

Learn now, O Priest of God, how to prepare yourself to perform your duties. Humble yourself, mortify yourself as a sinner, cleanse the least of your faults in the tears of repentance, pray. The

heavens will open, the spirit of God will replenish you with His gifts, and will prepare the hearts of men to profit by the efforts of your zeal.

Before you go up to the altar say to Jesus Christ, with St. John the Baptist: "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" I need so much integrity to deal devoutly with mysteries so dreadful! Thou alone, O my God, canst render me worthy to celebrate them. But what do I say? Can a creature be made worthy to ascend to the altar? Had I the purity of St. John the Baptist, and the sanctity of all the angels, and of their Queen also, I should still wonder at Thy condescension in coming unto me. *Tu. . . ad me!* Who art Thou, O Lord, and who am I? Go forward, however, with confidence; but after Mass, when God will have come down to fill up the abyss of your nothingness, beseech Him to destroy all pride in you, and to adorn your soul with all justice in granting to you the gift of perfect humility.

Super bonitate tua et magna misericordia tua, Domine, confisus, accedo aeger ad Salvatorem, esuriens et sitiens ad fontem vitae, egenus ad Regem coeli, servus ad Dominum. . . Confiteor vilitatem meam, agnosco tuam bonitatem. . . ; et gratias ago propter nimiam caritatem. (Imit., l. iv. c. 11.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. At Nazareth, Mary sad and satisfied at the same time at the departure of her Son. On the banks of the Jordan, a multitude gathered hastily from all parts of Judea, John the Baptist emaciated by fastings, Jesus Christ standing among sinners. In heaven, consider all the angels in admiration; God the Father, who is about to glorify Jesus.

Second Point.—Hear the words. The words of the Saviour bidding farewell to and consoling His Mother. The words of St. John the Baptist: "I ought to be baptized by Thee, and comest Thou to me?" The words of Jesus Christ: "Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." The words of the eternal Father: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus begins the work assigned to Him by the will of His Father. He bids farewell to His Mother, walks on alone toward the Jordan. He desires to be baptized by St. John, who at first through humility, refuses to do so, but then yields through obedience. The Saviour of the world enters the water. What prodigy of self-debasement! "He who humbles himself shall be exalted." God glorifies this humble penitent whilst He prays. He is now recommended not only to the attention, but to the adoration of mankind.

MEDITATION XLVIII.

JESUS CHRIST IN THE DESERT. LOVE OF SPIRITUAL RETREAT.

1.—*Great Examples Recommend Spiritual Retreat.*
2.—*Powerful Motives for its Practice.*

First Point.—Great examples encourage us to love spiritual retreat, viz., the example of the Saviour and of His most faithful ministers.

I. The example of Jesus Christ. As the first and principal object of His mission was to instruct men, He seemingly ought to have speedily made himself known to men, and mingled in society. Yet He spends thirty years of His life in obscurity, and though He had only three years more wherein to preach the Gospel and to extirpate errors from the minds of men, still He makes a retreat of forty days before beginning His great work. Reflect how Christ's life was a continual retreat spent in silence, meditation, and penance. This was His preparation for His mission. He first communes with His Father alone. During His public life and in the most busy part of His labors, we shall see Him often retiring to mountains, to be there alone with God, and there to be more free to pour out His soul in prayer. "He went up alone on a mountain to pray." (Matt. xiv. 23.) "He fled again into the mountain, Himself alone." (John, vi. 15.) He had no danger to fear in the world. But the world has many dangers for us. He could retire within Himself as easily in the streets of Jerusalem as in the solitude of Nazareth; neither could He be disturbed in the quiet of His contemplation by the most prolonged occupation. He did not withdraw from the world into retirement for His own sake. He did not need this withdrawal. His object was to teach His ministers a love for retreat.

He foresaw full well its necessity for them. This lesson has been well understood by all holy priests in the Church.

II. In fact, when we examine their lives, we find that it was duty that induced them to devote themselves to the work of the ministry, and real affection made them love retirement and the exercises of a spiritual retreat. St. Bernard complains that he was too often forced out of his solitude. Although he had no intercourse with the world, save in the interests of Jesus Christ, he declares that he withdrew from God as far as he withdrew from

his cell and from his life of silence. St. Augustine, being yet only a priest, beseeches his bishop to leave him in holy retreat about two months; for, he says, he had need of all that time to strengthen his soul, and to qualify himself to be useful to others without losing himself. St. Ambrose made during every year one or two retreats; his last one lasted one whole month. It was in retirement, and in houses of prayer and recollection in which they immured themselves at stated times, that St. Gregory at Nazianzen, St. Eusebius at Vercelli, St. Basil at Casana, St. Martin at Tours, St. Charles at Milan, St. Gregory the Great at Rome, saints, such as Dominic, Francis of Assisi, Vincent Ferrer, Francis de Sales, Xavier, Regis, and others, learned by communing with God alone how to speak so worthily of Him and of holy things. Devoting some time to the ministry and some time to solitude, they always refreshed their souls in retreat. They acquired new strength. They returned to the world burning with a sacred ardor to work new conquests for Jesus Christ. These ought to be our models. Do we make any strong efforts to imitate them?

Second Point.—Powerful motives persuade us to love retreat. To ask if a priest should esteem spiritual retirement is to ask if he must be a good priest, and if he have the spirit of the priesthood as well as its character. The priest is indeed a man essentially *separated, consecrated.* "I have separated you from other people that you should be mine." (Luc. xx. 26.) He is a man separated, singled out, who should "weep between the porch and the altar," and never appear in the world except to convey to it the inspirations received in retirement, to teach truth and sanctity obtained from his communing with God. On the day of his ordination the priest divorced himself from the world and received a sacred character which consecrates him exclusively to God and to His service and worship. This character can not be blotted away. Divorce from the world is eternal. His entire separation from the world can be readily reconciled with his life in the world, for he makes it his duty to lead as retired a life as possible; and at stated times he withdraws into solitude. In this he follows the example of Jesus Christ, and of all those who, like Him, have labored most successfully for the sanctification of mankind.

Priests are liable to contract a spiritual illness brought on by the uninterrupted exercise of the ministry. This malady is brought on also by dissipation of the mind and heart. The consequences are spiritual blindness and tepidity. To obtain a remedy, it is indispensably necessary to retire for a few days from the vitiated atmosphere in which we inhaled its breath. There is a real science, a purity, a perfection of virtue required in the

priest, which he will never obtain except by devoting some day from time to time to the holy exercise of spiritual retreat.

I. This is the science which Scripture calls "the science of God." Where is this indispensable science to be learned? St. Basil answered: In solitude, which he names, *Coelestis doctrinae schola. divinarum artium disciplina. Illic Deus est totum quod discitur.* (De Laudibus Erem.)

There are blind persons whom Jesus does not cure except by taking them apart: "And taking the blind man by the hand He led him out of the town." (Marc. viii. 23.) There are illusions which can only be dispelled by exposing them to the light of eternal truths, meditated on during a retreat.

II. If retirement is necessary for one's enlightenment, it is also necessary for the permanent possession of eminent purity of heart, which our sacred duties require. By the exercise of an astonishing power we beget in our souls and bring on our altars in reality the same Son of God to whom Mary gave birth at Bethlehem, the same Son whom God the Father begot from all eternity. Such a ministry would require the purity of Mary, and if possible the purity of God Himself. This reflection caused holy priests to fear. It made them wish eagerly for retirement. "Who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest. Lo, I have gone far off, flying away, and I abode in the wilderness." (Ps. liv. 7, 8.) We are in the world to combat its vices. Unfortunately sometimes we become tainted by their contagion. While we try to purify the world we ourselves become contaminated. If we do not leave it sometimes it will be next to impossible for us to remedy the evil it shall have inflicted. How can we heal sores whose existence we ignore. It is not on the battlefield or in the thick of the fight that the soldier feels his pain, or understands the danger of his injuries. There are many priests whose salvation is much endangered unless they renew the graces they have received and reflect seriously on their sacred duties in frequent spiritual exercises. How many to whom the angels of the sanctuary might repeat the words of Isaiah, "Depart, depart, go ye out from thence, touch no unclean thing, . . . be ye clean, you who carry the vessels of the Lord." (Is. lii. 11.) Go, go out thence, touch not any more that which is unclean, much less should you touch that which is most holy and most sacred before you have cleansed your soul in your tears. It is not only the vessels of the Lord, but the Lord Himself whom you carry in your hands, on your tongue, and in your bosom. Go, purify yourself in spiritual retreat. Retirement produces compunction, the health of soul, the death of vices; it is a furnace in which the gold of charity

casts off all impure alloy. *In qua dissoluta animae rubido consumitur, et scabies peccatorum ac scoriae deponuntur.* (St. Bas. de Laud. Erem.)

It is also during a good retreat, and then only, that we seriously resolve to lead a holy, a perfect life, which is for us a strict obligation. Finally, it is not amid the throng of people and the excitement of business that God speaks to the heart the penetrating words which leave a lasting impression. His words would be scarcely heeded, and even if well understood, their import would be neglected. "I will lead her into the wilderness, and I will speak to her heart." (Os. ii. 14.) It is not amid the noise of the world that I can expect to receive efficacious and abundant graces which are the guarantees of success, and which transform a fragile and imperfect clergyman into a holy priest. God is willing to grant me these favors in the silence of retreat to which He invites me through the request of my superiors and the voice of my own conscience. "Come into a desert place and rest a little." (Marc. vi. 31.)

III. Advantages of the retreat. We have already pointed out many of these. To know them all, we should consider the retreat as conducive to our sanctification and to the good of our ministry. A retreat revives or strengthens the grace of our vocation; it induces God to blot out our sins, and to remit all debts due to His justice, unites us to Him most intimately, gives our soul a generous impulse, by which it hastens its steps in the way of sacerdotal perfection, makes us worthy co-operators of Jesus Christ in the work of redemption, and the instruments of His mercy for the eternal happiness of our brethren. Such are the blessings which he loses who neglects the holy practice of these spiritual exercises.

Resolutions: I. Every year I will carefully, in one manner or another, perform the exercises of a retreat.

II. I will make a short retreat every month, with the "preparation for death."

III. I will habitually lead a retired life as far as my duties will permit. I will not leave my retirement without necessity. *Maximi sanctorum humana consortia, ubi poterant, vitabant; et Deo in secreto vivere eligebant.* (Im. l. 1. c. xx.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Great examples excite us to love a spiritual retreat. That of the Saviour and of His most faithful ministers. Jesus Christ spends the first thirty years of His life in the most profound obscurity. He prefaces His public life by a retreat of

forty days, and during the course of His preachings He often retires to the top of a high mountain to be there alone with God. For Him the world had no danger; but He wishes to inspire us with esteem for a spiritual retreat. All holy priests have understood the lesson. St. Bernard, St. Augustine, St. Ambrose—they were in succession apostles and solitaries. These are our models.

Second Point.—Powerful motives persuade us to love retreat. Its necessity. The priest is essentially a man separated, who should not appear in the world except to convey the inspirations imbibed in retreat. There are many spiritual maladies whose remedy is retirement from the world, more or less prolonged. A retreat is indispensable for our enlightenment and for stability in the virtues required by our duties. Its advantages: It revives in us the spirit of our vocation, discharges our spiritual indebtedness, gives to our soul a generous impulse toward perfection, enables us to co-operate efficaciously in the salvation of our brethren. Such are the priestly blessings which we find in a retreat.

MEDITATION XLIX.

VOCATION OF THE APOSTLES.

1.—*Object of this Vocation.*

2.—*Its Circumstances.*

3.—*The Correspondence of the Apostles to their Vocation.*

First Prelude.—Recall what is related in the sixth chapter of St. Luke. After spending the night in prayer, the Saviour assembles His disciples in the morning, and out of the number chooses twelve whom He names apostles.

Second Prelude.—Beg of God to give you grace to know the excellence of and your part in this vocation, and ask for grace to fulfil its duties faithfully.

First Point.—Object of the apostles' calling.

I. Christ intends to form apostles into a chosen body of ministers. To prepare these apostles for their wonderful work He bestows on them the utmost care and attention. He wishes them to be His companions in His daily life and the witnesses of His miracles They were to accompany Him in the cities and villages to which He was to carry the good news of salvation. Besides hearing His public sermons, they will also receive private instruction from Christ. To others He will speak in parables; to the apostles He will speak more clearly concerning the mys-

teries of the kingdom of God. They, in a word, are to be His friends, the confidants of all His thoughts.

II. He chooses only twelve to be His co-laborers in the great work of the Redemption. Their work will be to convert the world. Through His grace they shall be the masters and teachers of nations, the instructors of the human race, the princes of His Church, His ambassadors to the people. Certainly nothing could be more flattering to the apostles than their selection; nothing more conclusive of Jesus' love for them. "Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable." (Ps. cxxxviii. 17.) To Thee alone, O Lord, it belongs to raise the humble man from the dust, to raise him to the most sublime dignity, and to employ the weakest instrument for the accomplishment of wonders. Thou wilt alone have the glory of Thy own work, and no human agency can claim a share in its success. "The foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that He may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that He might bring to naught things that are . . . that no flesh should glory in His sight." (1 Cor. i. 27, 29.) O my God, give grace to Thy ministers to understand this truth.

Every priest has a share in the graces and privileges of this admirable vocation. Let us rejoice in the knowledge that we are apostles of Jesus Christ as they rejoiced who first bore this enviable name. Let us not forget the obligation it imposes on us. An apostle should henceforth ignore human ties, he should hear the voice of Jesus Christ alone, and go wherever he is sent. An apostle ought to be dead to the world, and the world dead to him. He ought not to live for himself, but to live and die for his adorable Master. Oh, how earnest his zeal should be for the interests of God! How ardent his love for souls! How pure his life! How elevated his thoughts! Acknowledge yourself unworthy, but at the same time thankful, for that admirable vocation. When you have yielded to some weakness or feel yourself tempted to some evil, ask yourself the question, Would Peter, Paul, Andrew, John think, speak, or act in this manner?

Second Point.—Circumstances relating to the apostles' calling. The manner of the calling of the apostles varied to suit the tastes and character of each one.

To some the Saviour simply says: "Come after Me." He promises a reward in keeping with the tastes of their former profession. "I will make you fishers of men." Sometimes He simply invites, sometimes He commands, as when he says to Matthew, "Follow Me." These words Thou addressest, O my God, also to those whom Thou callest to continue the work of Thy apostles,

and to help Thee in the most noble work of sanctifying Thy elect. "Follow Me," walk in My footsteps, study My life, and before you go to announce to the world the humiliation and death of a God made man, first become in every way a lively image of all My virtues. Follow Me by acting from the same principles and for the same end as Myself, seeking nothing but the glory of God in a perfect submission to His holy will. Have I carried out this recommendation?

Before choosing His apostles, Christ spent the night in prayer. To this prayer the apostles owed many graces which gave success to their labors and sustained them in their many trials. The whole Church was present to the mind of the Son of God. In the persons of the apostles He saw all His priests. In praying for them He prayed for each one of us, and obtained for us as well as for them all the aids we need in our duties. Let this fact give us confidence. If we can do nothing by ourselves, we can do everything in Jesus Christ. He never calls any one to a certain state of life without bestowing at the same time the requisite qualifications. "He made us fit ministers of the New Testament." (Cor. ii. 6.) This grace is a treasure. Our duty is to make it productive.

Third Point.—Fidelity of the apostles to their vocation. This fidelity was distinguished by its promptness, sincerity, intrepidity, and perseverance. At the word of Jesus, Matthew immediately leaves his custom house as the others leave their modest profession.

The sacrifice is made as soon as it is asked. The obedience of the apostles was also sincere. At the request of Christ they give up everything without hesitation—ships, nets, parents, hopes, projects for the future. They place themselves absolutely under the control of their Master, and offer themselves to carry out His designs. Those among them who, yielding to human frailty, unfortunately fall, rise up again. This very fall, while it makes them more humble, strengthens their fidelity. After Pentecost they separate to preach the Gospel. They afford to their Master the best proof of their love. They seal the preaching of His divine truths with their blood.

Yet one of the twelve apostles, chosen like the others by His Master, becomes a traitor and dies impenitent. Here is a just reason for fear. Judas had been really called, but he was unfaithful. O God, among the priests who to-day are Thy apostles, dost Thou see many, dost Thou see one who will betray Thee? If so, is it I, O Lord? O Jesus, preserve me from the crime of treason. If I have allowed the sacred fire of my vocation, lighted in my heart by consecrating hands, to smoulder and perhaps to

die, rekindle it by Thy grace. If I who was bound to guard and guide the sheep, if I am myself a stray sheep, seek, I beseech Thee, an unworthy servant. If I have lost the zeal of my first vocation, do Thou restore it. I am about to ascend the altar to offer myself wholly to Thee, ready to labor and to suffer for Thee. I have one regret, that is to have so feebly responded to the designs of Thy mercy. Now, however, I have only one desire, that is, to repair the lamentable part of my life, and to act henceforth as a true apostle. *Omnes sancti apostoli, orate... Regina apostolorum, ora pro nobis.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Object of the apostles' vocation. Christ intends to make of the apostles a *corps d'élite* distinguished by its piety and learning, destined by Him to instruct and sanctify the world. They shall be princes of His Church, His ambassadors to the nations. No selection more flattering to the apostles. Every priest shares the graces and privileges of this sublime vocation.

Second Point.—Manner and circumstances of the apostles' vocation. The method used by Christ in their vocation is adapted to the tastes and disposition of each of them. "Come after Me, follow Me." This is, O Lord, what Thou didst say and what Thou sayest to me now. Jesus spent the night in prayer before choosing His apostles. The whole Church was present to His mind. In praying for all His priests, He prayed for us. Let this fact give us confidence. We can do all things in Him who is our strength.

Third Point.—Fidelity of the apostles to their vocation. It was prompt, sincere, generous, persevering. Yet one of them became a traitor and died in his impenitence. What a subject for fear! *Omnes sancti apostoli, orate.... Regina apostolorum, ora pro nobis.*

MEDITATION L.

IN THE APOSTOLIC MINISTRY EVERYTHING MUST COME FROM GOD: VOCATION, MISSION, SUCCESS.

"I have chosen you and placed you that you may go and bring forth fruit." (Joan. xv. 16.)

1.—*God Chooses His Ministers: "I have Chosen You."*

2.—*God Gives them the Mission and Destination: "That You may Go."*

3.—*God Gives Success to their Labors: "And Bring forth Fruit."*

First Point.—God alone chooses His ministers. To understand that to God alone belongs the right of the selection of His ministers, it suffices to have a correct idea of the duties and privileges annexed to this most sublime of all vocations. What is the work to be done? It is, according to the expression of St. Denis, to labor in the most divine of all divine avocations. Priests are called to be the "light of the world," to dispel errors by the light of truth; the "salt of the earth," to arrest the corruption of vice. The ministers of God are called "the defenders of the faith," "the support of religion," the oracles of the high and of the lowly, of the learned and of the illiterate. The work to be accomplished is the overthrow of the empire of evil, and the establishment of the empire of good; to root out and plant, to destroy and to build up, to stand up as a wall of brass and a column of iron against the iniquities of the world and the machinations of hell, to convert sinners, to help the just and to advance the cause of virtue. To bring about this accomplishment priests must preach the Gospel, make known its truths, announce the reward promised to the good and the punishment threatened to the wicked. This preaching should be accompanied with a conviction and zeal which God alone can impart. In a word, priests should be an active power under the control of God and vicegerents of Jesus Christ for the sanctification of souls.

This plain picture of the apostolic man demonstrates the necessity of a divine vocation. The example of our Saviour shows it in a still stronger light. He possessed unquestionably in a most incomparable degree all the qualities required of the priest. To be most perfect as a priest one ought to be innocent. Jesus Christ is purity itself. Extensive knowledge is demanded of the priest. All the treasures of science are hidden in the Saviour. The priest

should wield great power; Jesus Christ is omnipotent. Ardent zeal should be the quality of the priest. The prophet says of Christ, "The zeal of Thy house hath eaten me up." "I came to send fire upon earth." The priest should have a pure intention. Christ said of Himself: "I seek not My glory, but the glory of the Father who sent Me." Nevertheless, with all these advantages, He does not think Himself authorized to assume the sacerdotal dignity. He wants to be invested with it by His Father. "Christ did not glorify Himself that He might be made a high priest." (Heb. v. 5.)

Is it possible there could be men so rash as to usurp this dignity, to force an entrance for themselves into the sanctuary of God, and constitute themselves His ministers against His will? St. Bernard knew not how to qualify this audacity. *Quid istud temeritatis!* he exclaims, *imo quid infamiae est? Ubi timor Dei? Ubi mortis memoria? Ubi gehennae metus et terribilis expectatio, judicii?* (Decl. vi. 5.) Would to God that even to-day this criminal attempt were less frequent. Less scandals would afflict the Church of God? What is the result if, in taking so important a step, a man listened to mere worldly considerations and not to the voice of God? St. Augustine says: *Si non es vocatus, fac ut voceris.* The mercy of God, which knows no limits, can absolutely rectify the want of vocation; but the words of Leo continue to be terrible and true: *Difficile est ut bono peragantur exitu quae malo sunt inchoata principio.*

I fancy, O my God, that on this score I have no cause for uneasiness. I have only to give Thee thanks. Before I entered this career, so honorable and so dangerous, I prayed and consulted and desired in all sincerity to know the state Thou hadst destined for me; and when the gate of Thy sanctuary opened to me, I thought I could say in truth, "Behold here I am, because Thou hast called me." Yet this general vocation does not suffice.

Second Point.—God alone selects special duties for each of His ministers. All do not possess the same qualifications. All can not have the same object in life. "Some," says St. Paul, "have received the gift of knowledge, others the gift of wisdom; these have the gift of the word, others that of interpreting the Scriptures. Ministries are different, as are also the operations of the Holy Ghost. For this reason one is called to be teacher, another to be pastor; this is an apostle, that other is a spiritual director. In this manner does almighty God dispose of His ministers for the growth and sanctification of His Church." (Cor. xiii. 28; Eph. iv. 11.)

To all the laborers are said the words, "Go you also into my vineyard," but each one should attend to the special work as-

signed to him by the Master. Blessed is he who doe well what he is commanded to do, who is faithful to fulfil his mission, with due regard to time, places, and circumstances! Why should they say: I have worked so many years under another, am I not able to govern a parish? But Jesus Christ would say, "My hour has not yet come." Why should they say: Must I always remain in this inferior position? But if God willeth that I should wear out my life in this out-of-the-way place, should I not remember that Jesus Christ spent His in the country whither His Father had sent Him? He was inflamed with zeal for the salvation of souls, and this fire He desired to spread through the whole world; yet He leaves not Judea, and gives the reason of His action: "I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel." (Matt. xv. 24.)

A priest who seeks to please God alone says to himself as he enters the priesthood: Which is, O Lord, the ministry Thou entrustest to my care? Where wilt Thou that I begin, where wilt Thou that I end? Whatever may be the portion of Thy vineyard Thou wilt assign to me, my will is to fertilize it with my sweat, and to do this, I devote my affections, my health, my whole life. Finally, let us accept our mission with all its circumstances. There are positions to which are annexed honors, temporal advantages, and many encouragements; others hold out nothing but arduous labors, annoyances, and sufferings. Let us be ready with Jesus Christ to ascend Calvary as well as Mount Thabor, when such will be the will of our heavenly Father. If we have such dispositions we will surely receive abundant blessings.

Third Point.—God alone can give success to our labors. We can not meditate too often upon this truth, so important it is that we should be convinced of it. What are we, what can we do of ourselves? Dust and ashes, useless branches, barren, dried-up trees. Incapable as we are in the order of nature to raise our eyes, to move our arms without God's assistance, can we hope in the order of grace to operate the resurrection of the dead, to create new souls for God? We would be as foolish as we would be guilty, were we to say within ourselves: I by my talents and my zealous efforts converted sinners and reanimated lukewarm souls. Do we wish for success? Let us expect it from divine grace alone, but let us not neglect the co-operation which God requires. The fruits will, ordinarily, be the more plentiful as they will occasion less praise, and shall have grown out of obstacles under the shadow of the cross.

We, O my God, can announce Thy Gospel, excite admiration in the pulpit, give advice in the confessional. *Nos loquimur foris.* But Thou alone, O adorable Master, canst grant the intelligence

and love of the truths we preach. Thou alone canst overcome and master rebellious wills. Thou alone canst move consciences and build for Thyself a sanctuary within the heart of man. *Ipse intellectum aperit, ipse tenet, ipse movet, ipse aedificat.* (St. Aug.) Who, then, shall be the priest who will produce most fruit within souls? Who shall be the greatest in bringing about the salvation of Thy elect? Thou hast said it, O Lord, it is he who abideth in Thee, and in whom Thou abidest. "He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit, for without Me you can do nothing." (Joan. xv. 5.)

Resolutions: I. In the most serious difficulties of the ministry, have recourse to God with confidence. He has kindly called you, He sends you, His cause is the one you sustain. "Fear not: the battle is not yours, but God's." (2 Par. xx. 15.)

II. Keep yourself ever closely united to God, as the instrument to the hand which uses it. On your docility to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost the success of your labors depends.

III. Return to God the glory of all the good you may have done, attributing nothing whatever to yourself. It is quite probable that you would have accomplished much more good if you had forgotten yourself more and had granted wider scope to the action of grace. "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to Thy name give glory."

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God alone can call men to the apostolic ministry. Which is the work to be accomplished? "To be the light of the world, the salt of the earth," the agents of God for the sanctification of mankind. "Christ did not glorify Himself that He might be made a high priest." Can a man be so rash as to usurp this dignity?

Second Point.—God alone can select a special duty for each one of His ministers. To all the laborers are said the words, "Go you also into My vineyard;" but the Master assigns to each one his particular work. Jesus Christ exercised His zeal within the limits of Judea because such was the will of His Father.

Third Point.—God alone can give success to the labors of His ministers. Woe to us if we indulge in the sinful thought, "I, by my talents and the works of my zeal, converted sinners." If we desire success, let us expect it from the grace of God only, not neglecting, however, our co-operation, which God expects. *Nos loquimur foris; ipse intellectum aperit, ipse tenet, ipse movet, ipse aedificat.* 'He who abideth in Me, and I in Him, the same beareth much fruit."

MEDITATION LI.

APOSTLESHIP OF GOOD EXAMPLE CONSIDERED IN THE PRIEST AND IN THE PASTOR.

1.—*Its Necessity.*
2.—*Its Power.*

First Point.—The priest must give good example. The duty of giving good example to our neighbor is included in the precept of love. It is not exclusively peculiar to the priesthood, but it is more binding on the priest, whose affection for his neighbor should be deeper and more comprehensive. To the priest and the pastor it has been said, "Being made a pattern of the flock from the heart." (1 Pet. v. 3.) Display to your brethren the examples you have received of Jesus Christ, that they may become like unto Him by imitating you. This was also the teaching of St. Paul, who recommended his disciples to be imitators of him, as himself was of the Son of God, and this duty which he fulfilled he urged Titus, Timothy, and all pastors of souls in their persons to accomplish also themselves. "Be thou an example of the faithful." (1 Tim. iv. 12.) "In all things show thyself an example of good works."

Remember the words which the Church repeated to us at all the different stages at which we stopped in climbing up from the foot to the summit of the holy mountain of the priesthood. In conferring on us the order of *porter*, she declared it to be our duty, not merely to open the house of God to the people with material keys, but much more to open for them the heart of God, and to close people's hearts against the devil, by our words and examples. To the *lector* she said: When you will exercise your functions you will stand in a high place, and this position of your body will teach you that you must show to all an example of heavenly life. *Quatenus cunctis . . . coelestis vitae formam praebeatis.* The candle which the *acolyte* carries is a symbol of the light he should spread around him by good example. To the *deacon* belongs the duty of defending and sustaining the Church. How must he perform it? *Ornatu sancto, praedicatu divino, exemplo perfecto.* The people must be able to read in his deeds the Gospel which he announces. *Ut quibus Evangelium ore annuntiatis vivis operibus exponatis.* Consider how strongly this obligation is imposed on the priest. The sweet odor of his life should be a perfume whose fragrance is most pleasing to the holy spouse of Jesus Christ. His well-known

chastity should be a censure of evil morals; he should make the brightness of all virtue shine before the eyes of all that he teaches. (Pont.) This obligation of edification is not fulfilled by merely giving no scandal. He who lets a field go to waste injures it by neglect of cultivation. We shall not be the light of the world, we shall not successfully dispel its darkness and illusions, save by adding the preaching of good examples to the preaching of the word. "You are the light of the world. . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matt. v. 14, 16.) No priest ignores the obligation of good example, but how rarely we measure its extent. To be seen from afar, and to speak from an elevated place, it is not necessary for priests to come down to the level of all, and sink lower than some of them.

Second Point.—Power of good example demonstrated by authority, reason, and experience.

I. Although Jesus Christ, the eternal Word of the Father, possessed in an infinite degree of perfection the talent of persuasiveness, He appeared to depend much more upon His example than upon His instructions for the sanctification of men. His imitation is continually held up before us. "I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also." (Joan. xiii. 15.) "Learn of Me, because I am meek."

I have just considered how solicitous the Church is to have none but edifying ministers; here is now the reason she assigns for this desire: "There is nothing that continually instructs others unto piety and the service of God more than the life and example of those who have dedicated themselves to the divine ministry. For as they are raised to a higher level than the things of the world, others fix their eyes upon them as upon a mirror, and derive from them the example they are to imitate. Wherefore clerics, called to have the Lord for their portion, ought by all means so to regulate their whole life and conversation, that in their dress, comportment, gait, discourse, and all things else, nothing appear but what is grave, regulated, and replete with religiousness; avoiding even slight faults, which in them would be most grievous; that so their actions may impress all with veneration." (Conc. Trid. sess. xxii. de reform.)

St. Chrysostom places the power of example above the power of miracles, and attributes the conversion of the world less to the miracles performed by the apostles than to the edification of their virtues. *Mundum converterunt, non protper miracula quae fecerunt, sed quia in ipsis verus erat gloriae pecuniaeque contemptus.* The same Doctor says in another place: *Bona exempla voces edunt*

omni tuba clariores; and St. Gregory: *Illa vox auditorem penetrat, quam dicentis vita commendat;* and St. Bernard: *Validior operis quam ovis vox; vox verbi sonat, vox exempli tonat.* The following maxim will ever be true: *Longum iter per praecepta, breve per exempla.*

II. Example, in fact, acts equally upon the mind and upon the heart; it enlightens the first, it touches and attracts the second. We believe our eyes rather than our ears. That which remains obscure in instruction is made clear by example. Preaching is the voice of virtue, example is virtue itself in its nature and substance. "When we undertook," says St. Paul, "to convert you to the faith of Christ, we had not recourse to the artifices of human eloquence." "Not in the persuasive words of human wisdom;" we employed a more effective means, which was to exemplify in our actions the sanctity of the spirit and power which is in us: "But in showing of the spirit and power." (1 Cor. ii. 4.) Example is powerful upon the intellect, which it enlightens, and is as powerful upon the will to overcome its resistance.

This was the last attempt of triumphing grace upon the heart of St. Augustine, which had been rebellious for so long a time. He fancied he saw holiness with a majestic countenance presenting herself to him, accompanied by a troop of virgins, and addressing him in a reproachful tone: *Tu non poteris quod isti et istae?* What can be answered to this argument? What others like myself do, I can certainly accomplish. Their example is, in a certain sense, more convincing to me than the example of Jesus Christ. This Saviour, being by nature infinitely holy, found in Himself none of the obstacles to a virtuous life that we find in ourselves. But in this instance the model which is offered to me is clothed with all my infirmities. Of all sermons the easiest to be understood is good example; it is also the most direct. The sermon relates to the action; good example is the action itself. It is the most urgent of arguments, for it bears with it encouragement. Finally, it is a continual lesson. I can not always speak, but I can always edify. *Perpetuum quoddam praedicandi genus.* (Conc. Trid.)

III. Experience in this matter leaves nothing to be desired. Let us open the Gospel, consult history, let us question ourselves. How can the wonderful success of St. John the Baptist's preaching be explained? Jerusalem turns out its citizens to hear him, and receive his baptism. He does not go into long dissertations to convince his hearers. The sacred writers do not say so. He does not spare the feelings of his hearers. Far from it. He cuts to the quick of their passions. "Brood of vipers, who has warned

you to fly from the wrath to come?" But you must read the preceding lines: "John wore a garment made out of camel's-hair. . . . His food were locusts and wild honey." He wore poor garments. He led a sober, mortified life, a life of retreat and prayer. He makes more sacrifices than he demands of others. Such is the secret of the wholesome influence which he exercises. It is said of St. Francis Borgia that those who did not understand the language in which he preached could not help shedding tears while hearing his sermons, and if asked why, they answered: "Because we have under our eyes a sight which is rarely seen, and that is a grandee of the world who has become a saint."

Let us judge of the impression which good example has upon others from that which it has upon ourselves. When we meet a brother priest redolent with the spirit of the priesthood, pious, full of zeal, having no guide but his conscience, his conduct becomes for us a touching exhortation. Moreover, in reading the lives of the saints, we feel our hearts inflamed with a desire to walk in their steps. Now if virtues recited, and, as it were, painted, thus excite our resolution, what shall we say of the living spectacle of these same virtues, practised by men who have neither more means of sanctification nor fewer weaknesses than ourselves? Blessed, therefore, is the flock confided to the care of an exemplary priest! Should this pastor be in point of talent inferior to other pastors, he shall have over them the only superiority which a priest should be ambitious to possess—he will be more useful than they. He does not always arrest evil; but he infuses remorse into souls; if he does not bring back the stray sheep, he lays the way for their return. . . . How beautiful it is, says St. Ambrose, to know that to be seen suffices to do good. *Quam pulchrum ut videaris et prosis!*

O Jesus, come create in me Thy life through the sacrament of Thy love. If Thy spirit animates me, I shall reproduce Thy examples; in beholding me they shall then behold Thee; and that action so sweet and so strong, which Thou didst exercise during Thy mortal life on the hearts of men, I shall also exert upon them, for Thy glory and the salvation of my brethren.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Necessity for the priest of giving good example. To the priest and the pastor it has been said: "Being made a pattern of the flock." St. Paul invited the faithful to imitate him, as he himself imitated Jesus Christ. To all his fellow laborers he left this recommendation: "Be thou an example for the faithful." The Church reminded us of this obligation at each of our

ordinations. We shall be the light of the world, inasmuch only as we shall add the edification of good example to the preaching of the divine word. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works."

Second Point.—Efficacy of good example demonstrated by authority, by reason, by experience. Authority of Jesus Christ: He always invites us to imitate Him. "I have given you an example. . . . Learn of Me because I am meek." Authority of the Church, Council of Trent, the holy Doctors. Example acts equally upon the mind to enlighten it, and on the heart to move it. Why can I not do what others like myself do? What can be brought against this argument? In this matter experience leaves nothing to be added. How can we explain the success of John the Baptist? By his examples. He makes more sacrifices than he requires of others. The reading of the lives of the saints makes upon us the most wholesome impressions. These, however, are virtues simply related, and, as it were, painted on canvas. Blessed is the flock committed to the charge of an exemplary pastor!

MEDITATION LII.

FIRST QUALITY OF SACERDOTAL ZEAL: ACTIVITY.

1.—*Activity Essential to True Zeal.*
2.—*Acts which Manifest Activity of Zeal.*

First Point.—Activity is essential to sacerdotal zeal. We must apply to true zeal whatever is said of charity. The latter is its source. Action is its life. If I am content with merely grieving at the sight of evil, when in reality God wishes me to struggle against it; if I drop my arms in despondency when I should seek and use all the means which a desire for God's glory suggests, I become recreant to my trust, and assume the most dreadful responsibility. "I will require his blood at thy hand." The inaction of priests would bring about the ruin of religion, just as the sleeping of the shepherd occasions the loss of the flock. "Whilst men were asleep."

Fire is used as a symbol by the holy writers to represent the devotedness with which God fills the hearts of good priests, the eagerness to make Him known, and to spread happiness by the manifestation of His love. "And Elias, the prophet, stood up as a fire, and his word burnt like a torch." (Ecclus. xlviii. 1.) "Who makest . . . Thy ministers to burn as fire." (Ps. ciii. 4.)

Jeremiah says of himself, "There came in my heart as a burning fire." (Jer. xx. 9.) And St. Paul, "Who is scandalized, and I am not on fire?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.) The same figure is found in the writings of the holy Doctors and interpreters. *Ignescat zelus tuus,* says St. Bernard; and in another place, *Zelum tuum inflammet charitas.* William of Paris defines zeal, *Flamma ferventissima de ipsa fornace Spiritus Sancti.* The heart of the apostle is the furnace of the Holy Ghost, whence issue, as so many sparks and flames, those animated words, those ardent exhortations, those tender rebukes, those prayers and menaces addressed to sinners in season and out of season, but always controlled by discretion.

Fire knows no rest, and so it is with zeal; though ever calm it is ever in motion; it has recourse to all means to attain its end. If I go back to its origin, which is the heart of God, where else shall I find an equal desire to communicate happiness, a desire so productive in results and in wonderful operations. "Sing ye to the Lord," says Isaiah, "for He has done great things; show this forth in all the earth."

Think of the zeal which has planned the incarnation, the priesthood, the cross, the altar! Was it not the most ardent zeal which induced the Son of God to come down on earth? "I came to send fire on earth, and what will I but that it will be kindled?" We know how He accomplished His mission. He preaches during the day, He prays during the night. He eats with sinners, He invites Himself to remain in the house of Zaccheus, He receives in private those who dare not speak to Him in public. He avails Himself of every occasion to instruct and persuade. O Priest of God, dost thou not hear Him saying, "Go out quickly"; "go in the streets, in public places, in byways, in the country; call the poor, the infirm, the lame, the blind . . . compel them to enter." (Luc. xiv. 21.) He urges you by the example of the shepherd who goes in haste after the lost sheep; of the woman who moves everything in the house to find the lost groat.

Such was at all times the zeal of apostolic men. Far from languishing in indolence, they felt indignant at the thought that the constant efforts of hell to extend destruction might equal their own efforts to save souls. To what sacrifices did they not submit, what pious artifices did they not employ to overcome obstacles, and conquer the obstinacy of sinners?

What is my record in regard to zeal? Shall I be able at the moment of death to call to witness, like St. Paul, all that were intrusted to my care; that if they lose their souls, I shall not be answerable for them, having neglected no means to save them, announcing the kingdom of God "publicly, and from house to

house," admonishing each one with incessant solicitude, speaking to their hearts by my tears when the words of my mouth made no impression? "I ceased not with tears to admonish every one of you night and day. . . . Wherefore, I take you to witness this day, that I am clear from the blood of all." (Acts, xx. 26, 31.) Am I not one of those indolent pastors who fancy they have done their duty when they receive those who come to them, but who care not to go in search of those who stray away? What would have become of the world, O my Saviour, hadst Thou waited for it to come to Thee? Where should I be myself, what would have become of me, if Thy grace had not prevented me?

Second Point.—Acts which manifest zeal. St. Gregory applies to the pastor this passage of Proverbs: "My son, if thou be surety for thy friend thou hast engaged fast thy hand to a stranger, thou art ensnared with the words of thy mouth." (Prov. vi. 1, 2.) Each soul confided to my care is that friend for whom I went surety, and here is the advice which the Holy Ghost gives me: "Do, therefore, my son, what I say, and deliver thyself." How shall I free myself from this obligation? "Run about, make haste, stir up thy friend." (Ib. 3.) I must be expeditious, alert, to wake up slumbering souls, and provoke in them hunger and thirst after justice. I must therefore make myself "all to all," and not spare my person.

I. Nothing escapes the active charity of the good priest, neither the vices to be guarded against or suppressed, the virtues to be introduced or fostered, the good examples to be established, the abuses to be eliminated. After examining the dispositions of his people, he examines also the best means to be used to reach safely the souls which he wishes to win to God. A well-decorated church, ceremonies well performed, interesting instructions, kind services, affable manners, constant proofs of affection, will soon do away with prejudices, and establish close relations between the pastor and his flock. He asks himself what advantage might come from extraordinary sermons and ceremonies, from a mission, days of adoration, associations, confraternities, devotions.

He creates and propagates a mutual apostleship. Whoever has experienced the happiness of religion feels the want of communicating it to others. The converted Samaritan woman endeavors to convert her nation. The good priest uses the aid of all those whom he has brought under the sweet yoke of the Saviour. In the pulpit, in the confessional, in his catechetical instructions, in every occurrence, he endeavors to inspire others with zeal for God's glory.

II. He makes himself all to all. He adapts himself to all

classes; to the lowly as well as to the great, to the poor as well as to the rich, to the sick as to those who are in health, to the old and to the young, to the just and to the sinners, to the wise and to the unwise; all feel the wholesome influence of his zeal. He says with St. Paul: "To the wise and to the unwise I am a debtor." (Rom. i. 14.) He wishes to be able to say with the same apostle, "I became all things to all men, that I might save all." (1 Cor. ix. 22.)

As charity, however, is regulated, so also is zeal. Where I see the most danger, there I must show more compassion. Order requires that in matters of good works I should prefer more to less, that I should seek more earnestly for a conversion which promises the more beneficial results. Have I always followed this rule? Are not there in my flock some privileged souls which have absorbed nearly all my solicitude, whilst I neglected my obligations toward the others? Have I not had preferences? Whom did they include? Have I, for instance, understood that the greater part of my life and labors ought to be devoted to *men?* That an urgent need of our days, and the great duty of the clergy, is to lend themselves especially to the sanctification of the men. What a subversion to contemplate the more noble part of humanity sacrificed to the other.

Here again let us examine ourselves. Zeal without activity is fire without heat. It is a phantom of zeal. What should you think of yours? Has it this first and indispensable quality? Humble yourself always, but never yield to despondency, and beg of God in your thanksgiving after Mass that He kindle in you this divine ardor, which in apostolic men gave birth to works so numerous and so admirable. *Illo nos igne, quaesumus, Domine, Spiritus Sanctus, inflammet, quem Dominus noster Jesus Christus misit in terram, et voluit vehementer accendi.* (Miss. fer. vi. 4 tem. Pent.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Activity is essential to sacerdotal zeal. Zeal must act wherever it exists. The Scripture compares it to fire. Jesus Christ preaches in the day and prays during the night. He eats with Pharisees. He avails Himself of every occasion to instruct and to impress. I find the same activity in all apostolic men. Am not I one of those indolent pastors who never look after the stray sheep?

Second Point.—Manifestation of zeal. The zealous priest is all to all. Nothing escapes his active charity. Vices to be guarded against or remedied, virtues to be introduced. Churches to be

decorated, ceremonies, instructions, associations, missions, to receive attention. He communicates his zeal to others. He wishes to be entitled to say, like St. Paul, "I became all things to all men, that I might save all." His zeal is well regulated. Where he sees more misery, there he exercises more compassion.

MEDITATION LIII.

SECOND QUALITY OF SACERDOTAL ZEAL: MEEKNESS. LET US CONTEMPLATE IT IN JESUS CHRIST.

1.—*In His Teachings.*
2.—*In His Examples.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ with a serene countenance preaching His heavenly doctrine in meekness; or consider Him surrounded by His enemies exposed to ill-treatment and opposing His patience to their fury.

Second Prelude.—Beg of Him to grant you to know, esteem, love, and practise a virtue which was ever so dear to Him. *Jesu mitis et humilis corde, miserere nobis.*

First Point.—Teaching of Jesus Christ concerning meekness. No point of the New Law is recommended more frequently and more earnestly by Him than meekness to all the faithful, but especially to those who are appointed to guide them in the ways of salvation.

I. In His discourse on the mountain, the Saviour places humility in the first rank of the Beatitudes. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." In the second rank He places meekness, its inseparable companion. "Blessed are the meek." He calls the meek and the peacemakers "sons of God." He reforms an old maxim among the Jews in order to introduce mildness into His laws. "You have heard that it has been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy, but I say to you love your enemies, do good to them that hate you. . . Forgive, not only seven times, but seventy times seven. . . always," see that you return not insult for insult. "If one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other, and if a man contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." (Matt. v.)

Let us especially consider what is written in the eleventh chapter of St. Matthew. He had just revealed to us His greatness and appeared in all the brightness of His divinity. "All things have been given Me by My Father," etc. He wishes to unite Him-

self with us in affection, and says to us in the most tender language, "Come to Me, all ye who labor"; whatever may be the heavy burden of your sorrows, come, unload it in My bosom. You will find rest for your souls. You will find it in the imitation of My meekness. "Learn of Me because I am meek." I do not say to you, come to Me because I am the sovereign Lord—I say to you, come to Me because I have had so much compassion on you as to come down from heaven for you, clothe Myself with your flesh, take your sins upon Me, reconcile you to My Father, and bring to you the knowledge of happiness. This knowledge is comprised in these words: "Learn of Me because I am meek and lowly of heart." (Matt. xi.) Such is the spirit of Jesus Christ. Without meekness one can not be His disciple, one is not a Christian. This virtue, however, is still much more necessary to the priest.

II. This point Jesus Christ explains through St. Paul, who excludes from the sanctuary those who are passionate and pugnacious. (Tit. i. 7.) He who has the honor of being the servant of God, and much more so His representative, should be filled with meekness toward all. "The servant of the Lord must not wrangle, but be meek toward all, fit to teach, patient." (2 Tim. ii. 24.) "But thou, O man of God, follow after . . . mildness." (1 Tim. vi. 11.)

Jesus Christ is good enough to give a motive for this command. James and John had been sent to a city of the Samaritans to secure a lodging place for Christ. They soon returned, much disappointed and irritated. Their feeling might have been mistaken for zeal. They related to him that the inhabitants of the city were not willing to receive Him, and exclaimed in their indignation: "Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luc. ix. 53.) Jesus answered them clearly, "You know not of what spirit you are, I came not to destroy souls," neither is this the mission that I confide to you. I would destroy souls by employing the severe measures you suggest, but My goodness will save them. I will soon send you into the world. Be among men as lambs among wolves, as simple as doves. It will be through meekness, the fruit of charity, that you will be recognized as My disciples and My apostles, by the world and by Myself. Some will come and tell Me at the last day, "Did we not, Lord, prophesy, and cast out devils and do great things in Thy name?" and I shall answer them, "I know you not; depart from Me, ye workers of iniquity." How could you pretend that you represented Me, deprived as you were of the first virtue which I offer to the imitation of My disciples in My person? "Learn of Me, because I am meek."

We have heard the lesson of Jesus Christ; let us recall His example to our mind.

Second Point.—Perfection with which Jesus Christ practised the virtue of meekness. The prophets who had foretold the character of the Messiah did not picture Him to the world as the possessor of the treasures of science or by the number and splendor of His miracles, but principally as a man of meekness. "Tell ye the daughters of Zion, behold thy King cometh to thee meek." (Matt. xxi.) He is represented as a lamb which suffers itself to be carried without complaint to the altar on which its blood will be spilt. "He shall not complain, nor cry out, neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. The bruised reed He shall not break, and smoking flame He shall not extinguish." (Matt. xii. 19, 20.)

We know how much the reality surpassed the figures. In infancy Christ's disposition was so amiable that His presence dispelled sadness. He was so remarkable for His very meekness that people of His day gave Him the name of this virtue: *Eamus ad suavitatem, ut hilares fiamus.* (Lohner Biblioth.) Consider the meekness displayed in His public life; with what patience He bore with the defects, the rough manners of His disciples, nearly all of whom lacked education. He never tired of explaining to them the difficult or apparently obscure passages of His sermons or parables. He manifested the same patience toward the multitudes. They followed Him everywhere, and surrounded Him, and sometimes did not give Him a moment's rest. Was He ever heard to complain? Did they ever perceive the least change in His features? What did He not suffer from the Pharisees, who laid so many snares to entrap Him, proposed to Him so many captious questions? As long as they attacked His person only, He treated them with marked moderation, and when they forced Him to unmask their hypocrisy, in order to escape their wiles, how careful He was to shield their authority, whilst He strongly condemned its scandalous use.

Consider His generosity toward erring souls. His indulgence in this respect went so far that His enemies used it as an arm against Him. He was accused of being a friend of sinners. Did He seek to justify Himself? On the contrary, He declared that sinners were the first and the essential object of His mission. (Matt. ix. 13.) This admirable meekness of the Saviour converted the Samaritan woman, touched the heart of Zaccheus, saved Mary Magdalen, and caused Peter, after his denial, to melt into tears. Contemplate His meekness during His Passion, manifested to His disciples, who in the Garden of Olives were so little

affected by His profound sorrow. "He finds them asleep..... you could not watch one hour with Me?" With regard to Judas, "Friend, whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou with a kiss betray the Son of Man?" With regard to His executioners, "Father forgive them, for they know what they do." Each of those traits ought to be carefully considered in meditation.

Let the priest examine carefully this two-fold method of the teaching of Christ, word and example. Let him compare it with his own method, which savors of impatience and even anger, and is marked with a haughty, domineering, and repulsive demeanor. His conduct has nothing in common with the spirit of Christ. He is quite different from His model. Yet Christ says: *Ego sum via, veritas et vita.* If a priest does not follow in the footsteps of Our Lord, where will he end? Without that "truth," he will ramble in darkness, deprived of that "life," he will die a sad spiritual death. Alas! how many and serious mistakes we commit against meekness.

Ask pardon of the Lamb of God for having imbibed so little of His spirit, although you have been nourished every day with His body and blood. Let the kind invitation which Jesus once extended to the unfortunate people among the Jewish nation, and which He now reiterates to you, draw you to Him. *Venite ad me, omnes.* How meek and gentle He will be in your hands on the altar, if He finds His love in your heart. When He has entered your bosom, adore Him in silence as long as you can, and admire His unspeakable mildness which has urged Him to visit you.

Pray to Him that He may calm the uneasiness of your soul, that He may impart to you that peace of mind which is one of the most consoling of all feelings, for it gives us mildness, affability, and patience. You would always possess these qualities if you would meditate frequently and seriously on the meekness of Jesus Christ. *Recordare mansuetudinis Christi, et statim mansuetus eris et clemens.* (Homil. de Mansuetud.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—How Jesus Christ has taught us meekness. I. In His sermon on the mount, Christ names humility as the first Beatitude; and as the second, meekness, which is its corollary. No part of the New Dispensation is more frequently and strongly recommended. This virtue is quite essential to a Christian. II. This obligation is particularly imposed on Christ's ministers. Christ explains His meaning through the mouth of St. Paul, who excludes from the sanctuary those who are addicted to the oppo-

site vice. He explains it Himself also. Remember the answer He gave to John and James when they tried to influence Him to an act of severity. *Increpavit illos, dicens: Nescitis cujus spiritus estis.*

Second Point.—With what perfection Christ practised meekness. The prophets had pictured Him as a King full of meekness, as a Lamb who allows Himself to be immolated without complaining. He was known to be so meek in His infancy that His only presence put an end to sadness. During His public life consider what patience He showed toward His disciples, toward the multitudes which continually surrounded Him; what tender compassion toward erring souls. He wishes to be the friend of sinners, who were the first object of His mission. Consider His meekness, during the course of His Passion, toward Judas, nay, toward His executioners. Oh, how mild He is on the altar, at the holy table, in our hearts.

MEDITATION LIV.

MEEKNESS CONSIDERED IN THE PRIEST. ITS NECESSITY.

1.—*In our Ministry.*

2.—*For Ourselves.*

First Point.—Meekness necessary for the success of our ministry. Obliged as we are to employ all means for the salvation of our brethren, let us not forget that the greater part of these means draw their efficacy from meekness. To turn the hearts of men to God, we must ourselves possess the requisite qualities. The practice of meekness imparts them to us. This truth induced St. Ambrose to say, *Nihil tam utile quam diligi.* Religion can not be imposed on men. They accept it through persuasion. We can not "command conversion," but we bring it about by patience and diplomacy. Success is the result of confidence. There is no confidence placed in the priest who is of a rude and repulsive disposition. (Massil.) Such is the nature of all men, says St. Vincent de Paul, that all dislike to be rebuked with bitterness. Passion does not correct passion. The heart of man, according to Bossuet, is more easily won and guided by mildness than governed by power. Compulsion can not be used in the direction of souls; for the duty of the priest is to bring

to God willing subjects, and to offer to Him *children*, not *slaves*. "Meekness has for its companion three other virtues, absolutely necessary in the direction of souls—patience, compassion, and condescendence." (Boss.)

In the pulpit the pastor should address his hearers as a father. "Return, O ye revolting children," says the Lord. (Jer. iii. 14.) "Be converted, and why will you die, you house of Israel?" (Ezek. xxxiii. 2.) If, instead of this, he addresses them like an angry master; if to the severity of a moral doctrine, at variance with human nature, he adds severity of tone and language, bitterness of rebuke, what fruit can he expect from his preachings? He turns his hearers against himself and against the Gospel, and instead of softening souls, he hardens them. What will the consequence be if he is blunt and impatient in the tribunal of penance, if he manifests indifference in his language and manner to penitents; if instead of inducing them to weep for their sins by first weeping over them himself like St. Ambrose, the mind of the penitent becomes disturbed? In such cases the penitents good will is very short lived, and perhaps a sacrilegious fear will bind fast a tongue which confidence would have loosened. He will certainly conceive a dislike for a sacrament to which he would joyfully have had recourse again in remembering the kindness and goodness of the confessor. If in his relations with his people the priest gives way to impatience, sallies of ill-humor or outbursts of anger, they cease to consider him as the representative of the God of peace; they consider him a man, like another, liable to the same weakness, destitute of the virtues which he preaches, smirched with failings against which he hurls anathemas; and, after this, what good can he do? Were he an angel of purity, an anchorite by the austerity of his life, this defect alone would suffice to paralyze his ministry.

St. Bernard had himself experienced the advantages of meekness and the inconveniences of severity in the exercise of zeal. "Hear, O you judges of the earth," said he, speaking to the priests of this day, "know that you are the mothers of those who are intrusted to your care, and not their masters; seek rather to be loved than to be feared. If severity seem to be sometimes necessary, let it be paternal, and never tyrannical. As you show yourselves fathers by correction, show yourselves mothers by the mildness which will accompany this action. A moderate severity to ourselves is allowable; success, however, in the sanctification of souls is the privilege of men meek and patient. Experience has always taught me this truth. The experience is a sad one when purchased at the expense of souls.

Second Point.—Meekness necessary for the priest himself. I. The dignity of the priest requires that he be meek. They say of a man in passion that he is beside himself, which is tantamount to saying that he is no longer a man, and in reality he is not. He is no longer under the empire of reason. What a humiliation for him who is called the man of God. Everything in him ought to announce self-control and the serenity of his soul—his countenance, his deportment, his words. Only words of peace become a peace-maker. The priest has always been considered as the type of meekness. Ennodius said to the Emperor Theodosius: *Exhibes robore principem, mansuetudine sacerdotem.*

II. To sanctify his own soul the priest should be meek. Without meekness and the peace which it gives to the soul, he shall not be prepared to receive the visit of the Holy Ghost, *non in commotione Dominus;* nor to profit by His graces. Were He to speak to him, he would not hear Him. Impatience drives from the heart wisdom and calmness in directing souls, unction in exhortation, devotion in prayer, watchfulness over ourselves. A fit of ungoverned anger suffices to bring on one of those storms which upset the soul and produce an injury sometimes irreparable.

III. Meekness necessary to the happiness of the priest. There is no passion more productive of regret than anger. Consider those outbursts of anger contrasting so sadly with the sacerdotal dignity. A priest without meekness is a man at war with God, with his neighbor, and with himself. Let us consider that he is at the same time a very guilty and unfortunate priest who disregards the lesson of his Master. "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart." If he is not meek and humble of heart, he has not the spirit of a Christian, and consequently he can not have the spirit of the priesthood. There is no foundation for the edifice of his virtues; his ministry will be unfruitful; he can not co-operate in saving his fellow beings, he can not save himself. Adorable Jesus! How could I unite my soul so often to Thy adorable heart which is sweetness itself, and not correct myself of those impatiences, of those outbursts of irritation and passion, so unseemly in one who has the honor of representing Thee on earth. I would be afraid on this day to approach Thee, did I not hear the very voice of Thy meekness inviting me again to seek in Thee a rest which I can not find outside of Thee. Thou alone, O Lord, canst calm the storm which troubles my soul, and render my heart like unto Thine. *Fiducialiter ibo ad te, Domine, quia mitis es et humilis corde. Bone Jesu, aufer a me cor lapideum et impoenitens, cor superbum et immite. Da mihi cor carneum, cor mite ac humile, quod cordi tuo sit simile.* (Scut. fid., hedb. 12, post Pent.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Meekness necessary for the success of our ministry. In order to lead men to God we should win their confidence and govern them by mildness. *Nihil tam utile quam diligi.* Meekness gives us three virtues necessary for the direction of souls—patience, compassion, and affability. If the priest gives way to anger or irritation in the pulpit, in the confessional, and in his relations with others, he is no longer considered the representative of the God of peace; that defect alone paralyzes his ministry. Experience, perhaps, has taught me this truth as it did St. Bernard.

Second Point.—Meekness necessary for the priest himself. I. The dignity of the priest requires that he be meek: A man beside himself can hardly be called a man. II. Meekness necessary to his sanctification: Without peace, which is born of meekness, the priest is unprepared to receive the virtues of the Holy Ghost, and to fulfil his functions. He has no wisdom to advise, no unction to exhort others, nor devotion in prayer. III. Meekness necessary for his happiness: There is no passion so productive of regrets as the passion of anger.

MEDITATION LV.

SACERDOTAL MEEKNESS. ITS INFLUENCE.

1.—*Over our Hearts.*
2.—*Over the Hearts of Others.*
3.—*Over the Heart of God.*

First Point.—Meekness renders us masters of our own hearts. The first duty of a man who has self-respect is to control himself, and that is also the first condition required for his happiness. Happiness is an essential attribute of peace. The virtue whose influence banishes trouble from our souls and maintains tranquillity in it is meekness. He in whose soul it dwells governs his passions at will; first, because he easily perceives their different tendencies, watches always their issues; and, in the second place, because he gathers together for their overthrow all the forces which reason, faith, and prayer place at his disposal. If his indignation be aroused at the sight of some disorderly occurrence, he keeps it within lawful bounds, lest it degenerate into acrimony. If his zeal be suddenly inflamed at the knowledge of an outrage against God, he moderates this ardor, though laudable in itself, lest it become anger and revenge, instead of a means of remedying the

evil. If he receives a personal insult, he should stop to consider and regulate his feelings; he should immediately stifle the rising desire for revenge. He does not allow his mouth to speak offensive words, nor his face to show the least sign of irritation. He has felt the offence, however; the blow has wounded him. However, he controls himself through duty; he remains silent, or speaks with calmness, though nature urges him to break out into invectives. Is not this a pleasing triumph gained by meekness? Consider how much power and energy lie in meekness under the appearance of weakness. It brings man entirely under control, it governs his exterior conduct, and directs the very thoughts of his soul. It represses the sallies of impetuous zeal, of indignation or resentment. St. Climacus defines it: An imperturable state of the mind remaining ever the same, whether amid honors or humiliations, in sorrow or in pleasure. He compares it to a rock rising above the sea, breaking all those billows which dash against it, remaining ever immovable. Few virtues will appear as heroic to us as meekness, when we remember that its practice is continual in life.

Second Point.—Power of meekness over the hearts of others. Though some men in the beginning resist mildness, nearly always they end by yielding to its charms. It is said to be able to tame the wildest animals. It certainly ought to conquer the heart of men. We can not long refuse our affection to one who takes his revenge in doing us good, who answers insults by kind words and deeds; who will not even fight for truth with too much ardor lest he might offend against charity. Every one is willing to respect him who considers himself beneath others; they would rather suffer themselves than cause him sadness. Whilst severity, like a cold wind, sends a chill through our hearts, meekness, like an invigorating sun, imparts to them expansion, warmth, and action. It does not always cause immediate conversions, but prepares the way by inducing men to love what they have not yet the determination to practise. It eliminates prejudices and repugnances, it makes authority paternal and obedience agreeable. *Non dura ibi necessitate servitur, ubi diligitur quod jubetur.* (St. Leo.) The sheep hears willingly the voice of the shepherd which it loves. How amazing, then, is the power of meekness, in the pulpit, in the confessional, with the sick! There are few souls, however hardened they may be, that it does not soften; few wills ever so rebellious that it does not conquer. Hence the prophets desired to see the Messiah coming not as a lion, but as a lamb to conquer the world. "Send forth, O Lord, the lamb, the ruler of the earth." (Is. xvi. 1.)

Here we have the great prophet attributing the conquest of hearts and of wills to the power of meekness. Jesus, indeed, appeared among men concealing the splendors of His glory under the veil of phenomenal kindness. "The goodness and kindness of God, our Saviour, has appeared." (Tit. iii. 6.) He said to them: "Come to Me, all ye that labor. . . . My yoke is sweet, and My burden is light." And mankind, confiding in His words of love, threw itself on the mercy of its Saviour. The successes of apostolic men were always in proportion to their meekness. St. Paul had been taught in the third heaven the art of governing souls. What rules does he follow? "By the mildness and modesty of Christ." What names does he use when speaking to the faithful. He calls them his *brethren*, his *children*, his *well beloved*, his *joy*, his *crown*. There is nothing more tender than his words to the Corinthians! "Our mouth is open to you, O Corinthians, our heart is enlarged, you are not straitened in us." (2 Cor. vi. 11, 12.) A charity so attractive explains better than his miracles the irresistible power he exerted on souls. So it has been in all ages past. By his mildness it was that St. Ambrose made the conquest of St. Augustine. *Eum amare caepi, non tanquam doctorem veri, sed tanquam hominem benignum in me.* (St. Aug., Cons.) The most elegant discourses never brought back to the Church so many heretics as the conversations full of unction of St. Francis de Sales. Charity in the person of Jesus Christ redeemed the world. Meekness in the person of His ministers applies to men the fruits of this redemption. Behold now in this virtue a prodigy of power which surpasses all the others!

Third Point.—Meekness gives us power over the heart of God. There is no good save in God; He can not love anything outside of His own perfections or what resembles them. Whenever He sees a resemblance to these, His love is necessarily attracted. Now there is nothing, says St. John Chrysostom, that makes man so much like unto God as this perfect calmness of a soul in absolute control. It thereby partakes in a certain sense of God's immutability. *Nihil adeo vicium Deo conformemque facit, quam ista virtus.* (Homi. xix. in epist. ad Rom.)

In our sacred books God is named the "clement," the "prince of peace." Of Him the prophet wrote: "Thou, O Lord, art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee." (Ps. lxxxv. 5.) "Oh, how good and sweet is Thy spirit, O Lord, in all things." (Wisd. xii. 1.) He says of Himself that His "spirit is sweet above honey." (Ecclus. xxiv. 27.) How could He but love those in whom that spirit dwells, how could He refuse to adopt them as His children? "Blessed are the peacemakers,

because they shall be called the children of God." Meek souls present to Him the loving image of Jesus Christ, the "splendor of His glory," and they are therefore the object of His predilection. Raguel was moved unto tears when kissing the young Tobias, he recognized in him the features of his former virtuous friend. The heart of God is affected with tenderness when He finds in us the meekness of His Son. This consideration has all power over His heart. David was kind toward Saul; on this sole account he promises to himself that God will not refuse him anything. "O Lord, remember David and all his meekness." (Ps. cxxxi. 1.) It seems indeed as if God, who repays every act of virtue, had special rewards for meekness. If he sees it in us let us be hopeful; our prayers will be acceptable, we shall be heard. "The prayer of the meek was ever pleasing to Thee. . . . He will give grace to the meek. . . . He will guide the mild in judgment." (Ps. xxiv. 9.) He shall have for us the solicitude of a father. "The Lord lifteth up the meek." (Ps. cxlvi. 6.) St. Chrysostom, explaining the expression, *suscipiens mansuetos*, says, *suscipiens* is not simply *opem ferens, sed quod est longe majus . . , recreans, fovens, bajulans, et velut mater in ulnis portans.* He will finally crown so many favors by saving us, by raising us to eternal glory. "He will exalt the meek unto salvation." (Ps. cxlix. 4.) What subject of joy for the good priests who have learned of Jesus the practical science of meekness. "Let the meek hear and rejoice." (Ps. xxxiii. 3.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Meekness renders us masters over our own hearts. He who is meek can easily govern all his passions. He curbs his indignation, however lawful it may be, he moderates his zeal, smothers revenge, when it is only a spark. Meekness exercises complete control over a man. Though apparently weak, it possesses great power.

Second Point.—Meekness has power over the hearts of others. Can we refuse our affection for a long time to one who revenges himself by good deeds? Severity hardens, meekness opens the heart. It does not always effect our immediate conversion, but it always prepares the way. For the conquest of the world, a lamb, not a lion, was needed. *Emitte agnum dominatorem terrae.* The successes of apostolic men are always in proportion to their meekness. Through meekness St. Paul, St. Ambrose, St. Francis de Sales achieved their most signal triumphs.

Third Point.—Meekness gives us power over the heart of God Himself. Outside of Himself God loves nothing save that which

resembles Him, and there is nothing which approximates man so much to God as meekness. *Tu, Domine suavis et mitis, et multae misericordiae.* Mild souls present to Him the loving image of Jesus Christ, the "splendor of His glory." Hence so many promises are made to the meek. *Mansuetorum semper tibi placuit deprecatio. Mansuetis dabit gratiam. Docebit mites vias suas. Diriget mansuetos in judicio. Exaltabit mansuetos in salutem.*

MEDITATION LVI.

THIRD QUALITY OF SACERDOTAL ZEAL.

1.—*Sympathy without Weakness.*
2.—*Exactness without Severity.*
3.—*Firmness without Obstinacy.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ in His relations with men practising all the virtues in so perfect a manner that there never was the slightest clashing. This was the effect of this prudence.

Second Prelude.—Beg of Him the grace to imitate His prudence.

First Point.—Zeal ought to be prudent and mild, but without weakness. The Pharisees asked Our Lord why His disciples did not observe the same fasts as the disciples of John the Baptist. (Mark, ii. 18.) He answered: "Can the children of the bridegroom be sad? Is it fitting that they should fast as long as the bridegroom is with them?" Have patience, there is a time for everything. As there are truths which I do not yet teach My disciples because they can not bear them, so there are also holy practices which it is not time to impose on them. No one expects as much from a tyro as from an expert in any art or profession. A wise master proportions his lessons and precepts to the weakness of those whom he wishes to form to virtue, just as he proportions his teachings to the intellectual capacity of his pupils. Jesus then defends His disciples against the attacks of the hypocritical Pharisees, not by censuring fasting, but He shows that in the most laudable actions prudence is always to be observed. He does not dispense them from doing penance—quite the contrary; the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then they will not only fast, but they will lead an austere, mortified

life. He simply says that His treatment of them should be in keeping with their present dispositions.

Thus everything in Jesus Christ manifests His goodness and His wisdom. He draws people around Him by His kindly disposition. Then He shows the purity, the perfection of His intentions by bringing about an occasion of practising the most exalted virtues. This is the great lesson He gives His ministers. They should consider, but not cater to the weaknesses of their brethren; they should pity ignorance, but not sanction its vagaries; they should be merciful and considerate, without encouraging indifference; and thus mingling the oil of meekness with the wine of strength, temper justice by mercy and severity by clemency. The practice of virtue is painful. We must first of all instil its love into men's minds. To those who love and practise virtue we should hold out its merits and reward. Do all thy ministers, O Lord, walk in this path of holy discretion? Ah! how common is severity in correction, and weakness in resolution.

Second Point.—Prudent zeal is exact, but not harsh. Priests who use a mere human policy, instead of making correction according to the fixed standards of morals, trim this standard down to suit the exigencies of the most reprehensible manners. They sacrifice principles or delay their application to some other time and place. Such is the origin of that accommodating code of morality, of that fatal indulgence which widens the road to heaven in defiance of Our Saviour's oracles, and cruelly lulls sinners to sleep and closes their lives in a quiet impenitence. It is certainly a most deplorable system which purchases peace at the cost of the most sacred duties of religion. The good priest must esteem the laws of morality as highly as the dogmas of faith, and will never yield to laxity in morals any more than to error against faith. He is exact, but not rigid. He is careful not to ask more than is required by God, and in the investigation of matters submitted to his judgment he always uses discrimination, not forgetting the age, temper, condition, and dispositions of the people concerned.

This idea is again inculcated by our divine Master in the twofold comparison of the raw cloth used to repair an old garment and of the new wine put into old bottles. In raising the dressing of a sore without great care we run the risk of aggravating the evil, perhaps of making it incurable. How many poor souls, only half converted, have been thrown back into sin through the ill-timed severity of a spiritual director remaining inflexible concerning doubtful obligations. Certain practices of piety may be in themselves very light, but it does not follow that they are always suitable to sinners who come from a long distance, and who

may possess the mere rudiments of Christian life. These may be compared to old worn-out vessels. We gain little, and sometimes we expose ourselves to the danger of losing everything, by attempting to subject them to the practice of advanced virtue. We aim at being exact, and we become *harsh.*

What should I do to avoid either harshness or too great leniency? I should study more carefully the character of Jesus Christ.

Third Point.—Prudent zeal is firm, but not obstinate. Strength and energy are certainly necessary to sacerdotal zeal, which is only charity in action. "Love is strong as death; jealousy as hard as hell, the lamps thereof are lamps of fire and flames." (Cant. viii. 6.) None are more unfit for an apostolic life than those cowardly priests who invariably yield, even when resistance is the most sacred of duties, whose idea of ministerial duty is only fear and silence. "Seek not to be made a judge, unless thou hast strength enough to extirpate iniquities." (Ecclus. vii. 6.) "Be not afraid at their presence. . . for behold I have made thee this day a fortified city." (Jer. i. 17, 18.) "Behold I have made thy face stronger than their faces and thy forehead harder than their foreheads. I have made thy face like adamant and like flint." (Ezech. iii. 8, 9.) There are circumstances in which the priest must say, *Mori possum, tacere non possum.* (St. Hier.)

How baneful, however, is this energy unless it be governed by the spirit of wisdom. All heresies were born of obstinacy, and from this same source spring many evils in the direction of souls. A pastor who depends too much on the purity of his intentions wishes everything to yield to his dictates. He adopts as a maxim never to change or reverse his judgment, and consequently creates misunderstandings and oppositions which often terminate in scandals. In any case, he alienates many people's affections and causes for himself difficulties which will eventually either oblige him to give up his position or render its useful occupation an impossibility.

Here is the important lesson which wisdom gives me: do not put too much confidence in your views or in the opinions of others. Let others' experience be a guide to your judgment, and always regulate both by the maxims and examples of Jesus Christ. For this end, I need, O Lord, Thy light and that sure and upright judgment and discernment which Thy spirit alone can give: *recta sapere.* This spirit I need to direct me in all my conduct and in the duties of the ministry. "Give me wisdom which sitteth by Thy throne. . . send her out of Thy holy heaven. . . that she may be with me, and may labor with me that I may know what is acceptable with Thee." (Sap. ix. 4, 10.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Zeal ought to be prudent and mild, but not weak. Let us study our model. The Pharisees ask Our Lord why His disciples do not observe the same fasts as those of John the Baptist. There is a time for everything; the disciples of the Saviour shall fast, but regard should be had to their present state. A prudent master proportions his lessons and his recommendations to the condition of those whom he educates in knowledge or virtues. The good priest should also have regard to the weakness of his brethren. However, he should not flatter them. The exercise of virtue is painful; let us first imbue men with its love, and then give occasion for its practice.

Second Point.—Prudent zeal is exact, but not over-rigid. The good priest, attaching equal importance to the rules of morality and to the dogmas of faith, knows no more how to yield to laxity than to error; he is exact, but he does not yield to excessive rigor. We are taught on this point by the Saviour in the two-fold comparison of the raw cloth and of the new wine. We ask too much, and obtain nothing.

Third Point.—Prudent zeal is firm, but not obstinate. No one is more unfit for an apostolic life than those cowards who can do nothing but yield, even when resistance is a most sacred duty. There are circumstances in which a priest must say, *Mori possum, tacere non possum.* Nothing, however, is more baneful than extravagant severity when it is not governed by prudence. Obstinacy has been the source of all heresies. There is wisdom in retracing our steps when we have gone too far. *Da mihi sedium tuarum assistricem sapientiam.*

MEDITATION LVII.

UNION OF SIMPLICITY AND PRUDENCE IN THE APOSTOLIC MAN.

1.—*Be Simple in your Prudence.*
2.—*Be Prudent in your Simplicity.*

Our Saviour, after saying to His apostles that He sends them as sheep among wolves, adds, by way of consequence: "Be therefore prudent as serpents, and simple as doves." (Matt. x. 16.) He does not recommend prudence alone or simplicity alone. He recommends both virtues. One is the complement of the other.

Their union forms one of the most distinctive characters of the apostolic man.

First Point.—The apostolic man ought to be simple in his prudence. Of this we shall be convinced if we have a true idea of evangelical simplicity, and of the opposite vices. Simplicity, according to St. John, is a habit of the soul which ignores all duplicity, all corruption of the mind and of the heart; for there is a simplicity of the mind and a simplicity of the heart. In matters of devotion the spirit, which is simple, has but one thought; God alone is its object. The heart, which is simple, has but one desire, and that is the accomplishment of the divine will. This is the pure intention, the *oculus simplex* which sees God alone. By this distinction of simplicity, and by this only, we shall arrive at unity, which is the goal of charity. "That they may be consummated in one." Duplicity is the science of the devils, who, having lost simplicity in losing humility, strive to strip men of this virtue in deceiving them. "The serpent deceived me." Hypocrisy is a corollary of duplicity, rectitude is the distinctive trait of simplicity. Simplicity of soul repudiates all coloring and disguise; it is open and sincere in action, free from deceit in its words. This is the virtue which Jesus Christ required of His apostles, when, placing a little child in the midst of them, He declared that, unless they were converted, and became as little children, they should not enter the kingdom of heaven. The priest who inherits the spirit of the apostles, should, therefore, excel as much in simplicity as he should excel in humility, in innocence, in resemblance to Jesus Christ; for there is nothing so simple as the being of God. From all eternity He has but one thought, one love, with one word He says all; it is His *Word*. This Word is truth. "I am the truth." If, therefore, the priest should be the image of God in a higher degree of perfection than the faithful, he ought also to be more simple. He should have simplicity in his faith, in his confidence, in his love, simplicity in his relations with his fellow beings; avoiding all that savors of cunning or duplicity. God loves hearts thus well disposed. "How good is God to Israel, to those who are of a right heart?" (Ps. lxxii. 1.) "The generation of the righteous shall be blessed. . . . To the righteous a light is risen up in darkness." (Ps. cxi. 2, 4.) "The upright will dwell with Thy countenance." (Ps. cxxxix. 14.) "I know, my God, that Thou provest hearts, and lovest simplicity." (1 Par. xxix. 17.) "The holy spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful." (Sap. i. 5.) "Dissembling and crafty men provoke the wrath of God." (Job, xxxvi. 13.) "Every mocker is an abomination to the Lord, and his communication is with the simple." (Prov. iii. 32.) The

apostles and martyrs were men filled with the most sublime wisdom and heroic courage; they ceased not, however, to be simple as children. What did we admire chiefly in St. Vincent de Paul, Saint Francis de Sales, and so many others who were the honor of the priesthood, if not their heavenly prudence united to the charm of simplicity?

Second Point.—The apostolic man should be prudent in his simplicity. A young priest full of ardor can not be too much on his guard against the promptings of inconsiderate zeal. Endowed with fervent piety, animated with the most holy dispositions, but not knowing the world, he becomes easily excited at the sight of existing or possible scandals. He can not be blamed for his want of experience. The exercise of the ministry has not yet initiated him into the lamentable mysteries of human perversities. The charity of Jesus Christ urges him; he hungers and thirsts for the salvation of souls. He naturally is alarmed at the constantly increasing immorality and impiety. The love of good is the hatred of evil. He becomes impatient at the fruitlessness of his efforts, he gives vent to his indignation, he bursts into severe denunciations. He consequently excites fear and repugnance; and, unknown to himself, he substitutes passion for true zeal. True zeal picks its steps cautiously and advances with a prudent slowness. Let us remember the words of St. Vincent de Paul. "Let us wait for the time of Providence, not precipitating its march, lest we encroach upon it."

The simplicity which is humble and prudent watches its own actions, endeavors to discover the snares that may have been laid for it. It studies men and consequences, and combines its future operations. It is highly important that in evangelical labors prudence should be the eye of the heart. This heart of ours, so impetuous in its desires, rushes on toward any object apparently good; but prudence moderates its ardor, enlightens and guides it on the right path. St. Bernard calls it *moderatrix et auriga virtutum.* Without prudence, zeal, a virtue most useful to the world, not only loses its efficacy, but becomes a fault, and at times degenerates into a grievous sin. *Tolle hanc, et virtus vitium est. Zelus sine scientia plerumque perniciosus est.*

More than once a single imprudence has destroyed conversions, caused trouble and scandal in a parish, and compromised the future career of a priest, on whose labors it had based bright and just hopes.

Ah, what consolation, when, amid the troubles inseparable from our ministry, we can justly say to ourselves: "I did not do anything rashly, I had matured my projects by reflection, I had

consulted. . . If success has not attended my expectations, I have at least accomplished the will of the Lord."

Blessed and wise is the pastor of souls who possesses the prudence of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. This is a rare but yet necessary gift. I can enjoy it, O my God, if I regulate my life on that of Thy holy priests, but particularly on Thy own life. *Altus gradus prudentiae, est ordinare vitam secundum exempla sanctorum, altissimus, ordinare secundum exemplum Christi.* (St. Bon.) Accept and bless, O my God, as a gift of Thy grace, my ardent desire and firm resolution to imitate Thy examples.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The apostolic man ought to be simple in his prudence. We shall be convinced of this truth if we have a just idea of Christian simplicity, and of the vices opposed to it. He who is simple in spirit has but one thought, God. He who is simple of heart has but one desire, which is the accomplishing of the will of God. Duplicity and hypocrisy are opposed to simplicity. The simple soul is opposed to all kinds of disguise. We can find an illustration of this in the little child whom Our Lord proposes as a model to the apostles, and to all the priests who have inherited their duties. God loves to bless the simple of mind and heart. "How good is God to them that are of a right heart."

Second Point.—The apostolic man should be prudent in his simplicity. One can not be too much guarded against the outbursts of unreflecting zeal. Let us wait for the time of Providence, and not encroach upon it. The moments of grace are not always the moments of our impatience. In a priest prudence ought to be the eye of the heart; without this virtue zeal becomes an imperfection, and at times a great damage. *Scientia sanctorum prudentia.*

MEDITATION LVIII.

FOURTH QUALITY OF SACERDOTAL ZEAL.

1.—*Zeal not to be Weakened by Contradiction.*
2.—*It should thereby Receive Strength.*

First Point.—Contradictions ought not to shake the constancy of the zealous priest. He would certainly misunderstand the nature of true zeal who would give up the work of God, renounce a project which evidently meets the views of Providence,

or be negligent in its execution on account of the difficulties inseparable therefrom. Zeal is also "patient. . . . hopeth all things, endureth all things." Zeal is constant. When the good priest entered the sacred militia, he saw before him during his ministry severe struggles in which victory must be the reward of unremitting efforts. The Son of God, notwithstanding His infinite prudence and charming meekness, had to suffer contradictions of all kinds; how can we, whose knowledge and virtues are so imperfect, how can we claim an exemption?

"All," says St. Paul, "that will live godly in Christ Jesus" will suffer persecution. (2 Tim. iii. 12.) But much serious contradiction may be expected by those who strive to propagate this life of piety amongst all men. They fight against hell, they must be prepared to meet its fiercest attacks.

The same must be said of the world. The priest is the open enemy of all its errors and vices; he is, as it were, the born apostle and defender of all the truths which the world resists. We need not wonder that the world rebels against the priesthood. Good men themselves may have spiritual infirmities of which they can not be healed save by the use of painful remedies. Our hand is against all, the hand of all against us. (Gen. xvi. 12.) Of this Our Lord forewarned His ministers when He said, "In the world you shall have distress." (Joan. xvi. 33.) The brother shall betray his brother, your friends and relatives shall rise against you, your pious designs shall be opposed by the very persons who should assist you in furthering them, you shall be hated by all, because of Me. Still have confidence: I have overcome the world. Not a hair of your head will fall; you will possess your souls in your patience.

We know what oppositions were raised at all times against the worthy ministers of the Gospel. They expected them, and these oppositions neither surprised them nor shook their constancy. Recall to mind St. Francis de Sales in the province of of Chablais, St. Francis Xavier in the Indies and Japan, the apostles in the whole world. Did they permit themselves to be frightened by obstacles whilst laboring for the conversion of souls? What would have become of the world if good priests had given up holy enterprises on account of accumulating difficulties?

For three centuries the Church fought and was dyed in the blood of her martyrs, to obtain the right to exist on earth, and we, men of little faith, are disheartened at the first trial. We wish to reap where we did not sow. We expect to succeed at once in converting a parish, but this success must be the result of long and painful labors. True zeal is as invincible as death. It waits

for the time of grace, but tries by its prayers and tears to hasten its arrival and continues its efforts, notwithstanding past failure. "He hopes everything, endureth everything."

Second Point.—Contradictions ought to strengthen our constancy, for contradictions are a pledge of success. The works of God prosper in no place save under the shadow of the cross. If you wish your works to produce fruit water them with your sweat, with your tears, and, if necessary, with your very blood.

The life of Jesus Christ is a demonstration of this truth. He had preached with a divine eloquence. His perfect life and His miracles were a preaching more eloquent still. They had the power of enlightening, touching, and gaining souls. And yet what was the result of His zeal, after three years of continual journeys and labors? Only a small number of disciples had followed Him. Many had left His company after some time. Shortly before He died, desiring to console those who had remained faithful, He promises them that things will soon change, for He is about to employ a means of conversion more efficacious than all the others, a strange means indeed. He shall die in ignominy, like a great malefactor. He shall be crucified.

"When I shall be raised from the earth, I shall draw all things to Myself." After He had "endured the supreme opposition" the whole world is in commotion, all the nations hear and accept His Gospel. His death gave birth to the elect. Had not the grain of wheat fallen into the ground it would never have yielded so rich a harvest. (Joan. xii. 24.)

The same with due proportion must be said of the apostles and of their associates in the evangelical ministry. The world will hate them, but the world will be converted. The more they will be persecuted, the more they will multiply their triumphs and extend their conquests. We can not too deeply meditate the truth that God wishes to have Himself alone the glory of His works. "That no flesh may glory in His presence." (1 Cor. i. 29.)

If all difficulties disappeared before you, you would be tempted to attribute the success to your talents, to the wisdom of your measures; you would not see the action of God therein so clearly; but when obstacles which no human power could conquer became a help to the execution of your designs, when good arises from contradictions themselves, when all is saved at the very moment that all seemed to be lost, you are forced to cry out in deep gratefulness, "This is the work of the Lord, and it is wonderful in our eyes; the finger of God is here."

Trust not in any good work which does not meet with some opposition. If the enemy of all good does not oppose it, we may

conclude that it causes him little alarm. You should, on the contrary, hope and be firm in your hope when all hell rings with rage. What consolation, when, at the cost of some trials borne patiently, we are enabled to extend the kingdom of God, to establish love of Jesus Christ in many hearts, to save our brethren, who will thank you eternally for their happiness. Such a success is never paid for with too high a price. *Non terretur pugnae periculo, qui victoriae laetatur triumpho.* (Lud. Blo. Psych. vi. 4.) Let the beautiful words of St. Cyprian encourage and strengthen you in your works of zeal. Writing to his clergy during the severe trials of a furious persecution, he says: *Ecce agon sublimis et magnus! O quanta dignitas gloriae, quanta felicitas, praesenti Deo congredi et Christo duce coronari! Armemur, viri fratres; praeliantes nos spectat Deus, spectant angeli ejus, spectat et Christus.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contradictions ought not to shake the constancy of zeal. When we entered the sacred militia, we must have foreseen severe combats. Victory and the crown are promised to persevering efforts only. Jesus Christ was subjected to contradictions of all kinds. Can we expect to be free from them? The end of the priesthood is to defeat the projects of hell. Is it surprising that hell should strive furiously against us? Ours is a relentless warfare against the world, passions, and hypocrisy. Our hand is against all, and the hand of all is against us. We know how great was the opposition the evangelical laborers had to contend with at all times.

Second Point.—Contradiction should strengthen the constancy of the zealous priest, far from shaking it. They are a pledge of success, because they are the seal of the works of God, which prosper only at the foot of the cross. Through His preachings and miracles the Saviour obtained more admiration than He did by conversions. Through His sufferings and His death He draws all things to Himself. The same should be said of the apostles and of their associates in the sacerdotal ministry. Let us mistrust any work which does not meet contradiction.

MEDITATION LIX.

GREAT OBSTACLE TO CONSTANCY IN ZEAL: DISCOURAGEMENT. ITS EFFECTS, ITS CAUSES, ITS PRETEXTS.

1.—*Injurious in Its Effects.*
2.—*Often Reprehensible in Its Causes.*
3.—*Always Unreasonable in Its Pretexts.*

First Point.—Injurious in its effects. When we consider the effects of discouragement in their relation to ourselves, we can readily understand how serious an obstacle to our sanctification is this weakness which relies on no one, not even on God Himself. Discouragement produces a distaste for prayer; for lack of hope causes us to perform all our actions listlessly. Discouragement deprives prayer of its efficacy; for confidence, which is the offspring of faith, is a virtue which Christ frequently praises and rewards. "Jesus seeing their faith said to the man sick of the palsy." (Matt. ix. 2.) It produces in the soul a feeling of sadness, indifference, and aberration which leads to numberless mistakes. However, we must here limit the consideration of its effects to their influence on zeal.

Discouragement relaxes the strength of zeal, weakens the energy, and breaks the good resolutions of the priest; produces a misguided resignation, which supinely appeals to God for the remedy of evils which we ourselves ought to labor to eradicate. A weak priest has a strong repugnance to any labor; or, if forced by circumstances, he will begin an undertaking with so little energy as to leave no scope for success. He is like a man ruined by a conflagration, who stands and looks mutely at the smouldering ruins of his home. The priest unmoved contemplates the sad condition of his parish, and remains inactive while so many souls of which he is the spiritual father are rushing into hell. Convinced that there is no remedy because the evil seems so vast, he lulls his mind in the repose of indifference and resigns himself to the awful sight of souls perishing eternally, which he ought to have saved at all hazards. The shepherd offers no resistance to the ravages of the wolves. What will become of the flock? When the torrent meets no banks to stop its course, we can easily imagine how extended will be the destruction.

Second Point.—Discouragement considered in its causes is often reprehensible. It may come from an excessive timidity,

or from weakness of character for which a man may not be entirely answerable. Sometimes it is nothing but a dangerous temptation, by which the enemy of souls studies to destroy those whose duty it is to save them; for he knows that all their strength is in their hope. "In hope shall your strength be." (Is. xxx. 15.) But if we consider discouragement as far as it renders us guilty, we can ascribe three causes for it: *pride, ingratitude,* and *want of energy.*

I. Discouragement resembles humility, and yet they are entirely at variance. If I sought the glory of God in my labors, I would be perfectly tranquil whatever may be the result, but because I seek my own glory also, I experience annoyance and depression, forsooth because success does not equal my wishes. This proves that I based success upon my own knowledge and efforts. Magnanimity in good priests can always be gauged by the humble sentiments they entertain of themselves. Finding in themselves nothing but sin, incapacity, and deep misery, they are careful not to lean on a reed which is so very weak. One must be extremely diffident of himself, says Fénelon, to hope for everything from God. Where shall we find a stronger hope than in the humble St. Vincent de Paul?

II. Another source of discouragement is ingratitude. Gratitude is for some hearts a burden of which they gladly free themselves. For this sin the Israelites were often rebuked, when, finding themselves in some straits, they murmured and became faint-hearted. They forgot the miracles of God's goodness and power in their behalf, or, if they remembered, they manifested no gratitude for them. "He has indeed struck the rock, and caused water to flow from it to quench the thirst of His people, . . . does this prove, however, that He will be equally able to give it bread in the desert? Can He also give bread or provide a table for His people?" (Ps. lxxvii. 20.) They imagined one miracle more difficult than the other. They seemed to forget that His past blessings were a guarantee of future favors.

We see only present difficulties. If we compare them with those over which Providence enabled us to triumph, we do so like cold calculating debtors, who, having repaid by ingratitude blessings already received, are afraid to contract new debts which would be no more satisfactorily discharged. Let us keep in our hearts the remembrance of God's past favors, as also of those which he pours down upon us every day. Thus we will become like all those who possess genuine faith, we will never waver in our belief, and even hope against hope. The Mass which He permits me to offer each day evidently proves that I may expect everything from His loving heart.

III. Finally, discouragement is a veil under which we would fain conceal from ourselves our own indolence. The exercise of every virtue is surrounded with obstacles. *Virtus in arduo.* In fact, virtue is virtue simply because of the strife which its possession requires. Among all virtues, however, hope is distinguished by its activity and energy. Hope fills the heart with a saintly fearlessness, and begets bold projects, generous sacrifices, great enterprises. An indolent soul prefers to slumber in its supineness; it rejects confidence which requires labors, sacrifices, and efforts; which expose it to contradictions and hardships. Indolent priests find it easier to say, "The thing is impossible, there is nothing to be done," than to try to put their hands to the work. Let them inquire to what ends this principle will lead them.

Third Point.—Discouragement is always unreasonable in its pretexts. The good priests are the Maccabees of the New Law, and the Holy Ghost describes them in these words, "They fought with cheerfulness the battle of Israel." (1 Mach. iii. 2.) God wishes the battle to go on, "They fought," but He also wants to see the joy which confidence begets, "with joy." Discouragement is never grounded on reason; but it shelters itself under pretexts like the following:

"I have to deal with a people irreligious, immoral, wicked, ignorant, hostile to the truth!" Your people, indeed, deserve pity! Ah, how much compassion you ought to have. Their sad condition ought to excite your zeal; do not allow it to grow cold and inactive. Why are you the salt of the earth and the light of the world, if not to banish corruption and darkness?

"I do my best, but do not succeed in anything." Labors which do not succeed in this present life shall not be without reward in the next. St. Paul said: "I have labored more abundantly than them all"; He does not say: "I have brought forth more fruit." "Every man shall receive his own reward according to his labor." "He rendered to the just the wages of their labors." (Wisd. x. 17.) Labor is the only thing mentioned. To plant, to water, to cultivate, there is your business; the increase, the fruit, the success pertain to God. Oh, our labor is blessed, its compensation certain, whatever the result may be. But let us ask, where is the priest who can say in truth: I do not succeed in anything? Do you not succeed in preventing even one offence against God? Do you not sometimes produce some remorse and prepare the way for conversions? Do you not atone for your own sins through the charity and patience which you practice?

"I do not possess the qualities required for the position which I occupy; I am not up to the standard of my high office." But

in this you have a new motive for confidence. God has imposed this charge upon you, and your weakness determined His choice. "The weak things of the world God chose to confound the strong." He will carry His burden with you, and cause His power to show forth in your person, so that all the glory may return to Him. "That no flesh shall glory in His presence."

"It is impossible to bring back men who have strayed off so far. A miracle would be required in that case." It may be impossible for you; for God, however, everything is easy. His power has not been limited, He has lost nothing of his love for souls. Is there anything so frequent as the miracles of His grace in the conversion of sinners? Do you place your dependence upon yourself, or on Him? "God is able out of these stones to raise children to Abraham." (Matt. iii. 9.)

"During a long time I have worn myself out in fruitless endeavors in this parish, and receive no consolation." Have patience. It does not belong to you to appoint for God the moments of His action. In a cold soil the best seeds grow but slowly. It may be that you have reached the term of your sorrows, and that the joys of a holy fecundity will soon offset so many years of sad sterility. Should it happen that others are destined to reap the fruits of your zeal, the merit shall be yours in the eyes of God.

"But, if I do not withdraw, I shall succumb under the weight of my labors, or under the annoyances of my enemies." Such a fate as this may surely be envied. Such a fall would secure you the most beautiful triumph. "*Sacerdos Dei Evangelium tenens et Christi praecepta custodiens, occidi potest, non potest vinci.*" (St. Cyp. lib. 1, ep. iii. ad Corn.)

Go to the altar, offer yourself to the Saviour, promise Him an unshaken fidelity. When He shall have given Himself to you in holy communion listen to His words: *Fili, accepisti Spiritum Sanctum ad robur; ne sis igitur pusillanimis. Confortare et noli timere: esto fortis in bello, et pugna viriliter. . . . Etiamsi totus mundus contra te armaretur, ne paveas repentino terrore: ego qui vici mundum tecum sum tanquam bellator fortis: idcirco cadent et infirmi erunt.*" (Memorial vit. sac., c. lxiv.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Injurious effects of discouragement considered in its relation to zeal. It paralyzes its action. Under its influence no sacerdotal strength, no energetic resolution can be of any avail. Priests given to discouragement persuade themselves that nothing can be done, because they see too much to be done, and they permit themselves to witness in cold blood the eternal misfortune

of souls. The pastor offers no resistance to the ravages of the wolves. What will become of the flock?

Second Point.—Discouragement is often sinful in its causes. Pride. The priest sought his own glory, he has not succeeded, and he is consequently dejected. He had depended more on himself than on God; he was not convinced of his nothingness. One ought to mistrust himself, and place his whole trust in God. Ingratitude. If I thought on the blessings conferred on me in the past and continued so lavishly in the present, I should hope against all hope. Indolence. They find it easier to say, "The thing is impossible," than to undertake the work. They prefer to lead an easy, inactive life rather than strive to do good.

Third Point.—Discouragement is always unreasonable in its pretexts. "My people are bad." This ought to influence your zeal. "I meet with no success!" You can not be sure of this. Does God measure the reward according to the success? "It is impossible to bring back men so wicked." For you this is impossible; for God it is easy. "I have not what is requisite in this position." New motive for confidence. *Infirma mundi elegit Deus.* "For a long time I have waited in vain for the happy results of my labors." Have patience. It does not become you to determine the moments of God's grace. "If I do not withdraw, I shall succumb." This would certainly be a most desirable fate.

MEDITATION LX.

ACTIVE ZEAL EXEMPLIFIED IN THE CONVERSION OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN.

1.—*The Work of Conversion.*
2.—*Its Success.*

First Point.—The work in the conversion of the Samaritan woman. In the conduct of the Saviour toward this person we find all the qualities of true zeal on which we have heretofore meditated. Three of those qualities are quite noticeable, viz., untiring activity, discretion, and sympathy.

I. Jesus leaves one country and goes into another. (Joan. iv.) From one conquest He passes to another. "Do you not say there are four months, and then the harvest cometh? Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes and see the countries, for they are white already to harvest." (Ib. 35.) For the good laborer of the Gospel

the time of harvest is always at hand, for there is always some harvest to be gathered. How many souls there are, alas! which wait only for our labors and attention to raise them out of the mire of vice, or to advance them in virtue. "It was necessary," says St. John, "that Jesus should pass through Samaria." (Ib. 4.) So it was, O Lord; charity guided Thy steps. Thou hast invited to come thither a soul predestined to gain to Thee many other souls, and to save that soul seemed for Thee a real thirst. "It was necessary that He should pass through Samaria." Good Shepherd! Thou sparest neither journeys nor fatigues to bring back the stray sheep into the fold. "Jesus then being wearied with His journey, sat thus on the well." (Ib. 6.) "It was about the sixth hour," the one-half of the day was already spent; there was not a moment to be lost.

Ah! when the priest realizes the value of souls, how active and enterprising he is, how careful of all his moments. He devotes every minute of his time to the salvation of his brethren. He is ready to go anywhere and to undertake any hardship to save even one soul. He seeks out, manages, and seizes upon all favorable occasions for this object. In an occurrence which another would call mere chance he sees a merciful design of Providence. While, however, charity kindles his zeal, prudence governs it with its timely counsels.

II. In the conversion of the Samaritan woman everything is conducted with admirable wisdom. To win the confidence of this sinful woman, who would not have dared to make known her doubts, ask questions, and particularly to avow her disorders in presence of His disciples, Christ managed to have them absent. The time was well chosen, and after their return Jesus does not fail to make them understand the worthy object of that interview, through which He accomplished the will of His Father, in laboring for the salvation of that soul. "You urge me to eat," He says, "I have food to eat which you know not of." (Ib.) His food, "His life," is to impart to souls the life of God Himself.

The thirst from which He suffered offered Him a ready occasion to gain the respect of this person by showing the confidence He placed in her. He asks her to give Him to drink notwithstanding the national antipathy existing between the Jews and the Samaritans. "Give Me to drink. How dost Thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman?" Instead of discussing with her the cause of the antipathy of the two nations, He very kindly and adroitly draws her attention from them and directs it to another subject. He excites her curiosity, and gradually reveals His identity. "If thou didst know the gift of God and

who it is who says to thee, Give Me to drink, thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him, and He would have given to thee living water," thousands of times more excellent than the water of which you think. He explains to her the properties of this wonderful water which quenches the thirst forever, and produces everlasting life. The Holy Ghost is that gift of God, and vivifying graces are this water of life. Of this spring of water Jesus is the inexhaustible source. He can pour this water into souls in order to purify and refresh them. Fidelity to grace leads to heaven; and how could they be thirsty, says St. Augustine, of whom it is written: "They shall be filled with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrents of Thy pleasures." (Ps. xxxv. 9.) If this water be the gift of God, and Jesus Himself gives it, it follows that He is God. Thus by degrees, in simple language suited to the circumstances, He raises this soul to the knowledge of His divinity and of the most sublime mysteries. What a model of prudence and discretion in the direction of souls! A model, also, of the most touching mildness.

III. Our Lord knew well that this woman was living in sin. At first He does not manifest this knowledge. He speaks as if He were apparently ignorant of her history. "Go call thy husband." Out of regard full of sympathy, He gives the name of "husband" to the accomplice of her crimes. One would say that He feared to mention her wickedness. He seeks merely to give her an opportunity of acknowledging it herself, which is the first step in true repentance. Ministers of God, if you wish to bring back a stray soul, employ the mildest means; they generally prove more effective. Know how to accommodate yourself to the character of the sinner, to his disposition, nay, to a certain extent, to his foibles. By treating lewd persons with kindness, priests have at times succeeded in converting them, whilst with the use of harshness they certainly would have failed. If you irritate a wounded man, he hides his wound. But by gentle treatment you will cure the wound and save the man. *Vitia mentium sicut et corporum molliter tractanda.* (Senec.)

Second Point.—Success of zeal in the conversion of the Samaritan woman. The first words of Our Lord Jesus Christ had impressed the woman favorably. She listens to Him attentively; she believes in Him and then acknowledges Him to be her God, the Messias, her Saviour; she becoming at once a penitent, a follower of Christ, an apostle. She loves and adores Jesus, and, impelled by love which is always active, immediately "she left her water-pot," and, laying aside all other care, she eagerly hastens to make Him known to the people. She reaches the city speedily

and proclaims everywhere the blessing she had received in meeting Our Lord. She who had hitherto been a slave to her passions experiences a sudden change. She does not think of her errand to Jacob's well, but devotes her attention to communicating to others the grace she has received. "Come and see a man who has told me all things that ever I did. Is not He the Christ?" She has no doubt on this point, but she has regard for the feelings of the citizens, and speaks to them in the same kind and persuasive manner as Jesus had used toward her. She might have said simply, Come, see a great prophet; but, to impress them more favorably in His behalf, she is not ashamed to avow that she had confessed all the evils she had committed. A soul which is inflamed with the love of God cares nothing for the esteem of creatures. The sacred fire which burns within her excludes all other affections. The Samaritans went to see the great prophet. Some were already converted by the words of the woman, some were prepared to be converted by Christ Himself. "Then they went out of the city and came to Him . . . Now of that city many of the Samaritans believed in Him for the word of the woman . . . and many more . . . because of His words." Should we not indeed admire the wonderful effect of a common apostleship and the many advantages it affords to true zeal?

O Lord, grant that I may fully understand the true sense of the words: "Didst thou know the gift of God, and who it is that says to thee, Give Me to drink!" Thou speakest thus to the poor sinner when Thou dost impart to him the grace of realizing his sad situation and of seeking reconciliation with Thee. Poor deluded man, if thou didst appreciate the gift of God, the grace offered to thee, the inestimable value of innocence of soul, its accompanying peace of mind, and its future eternal blessings! Oh, would that thou couldst know the author of this grace, God Himself, the principle of thy being! Oh, what a happiness it would be if thou didst understand the gratification and honor of His service, the punishment in store for His enemies, the extent of His mercy, and His desire of loading thee with blessings. If thou dost remember who He is who says, "Give Me to drink," thou shouldst seek eagerly that which thou rejectest with disdain. One thing is wanting to thy happiness, and that is to seek for it at its only source.

To Thy priests, O Lord, but particularly to Thy devout priests, Thou, O Lord, often sayest these mysterious words: *Didst thou know!* "Didst thou know the joy thou givest Me when thou thyself seekest to please Me, when I see thee wholly occupied with the care of saving souls!" Thou sayest it to myself, dear Lord, at this moment, when I am preparing to perform the most divine of

all my functions: "Didst thou understand!" *Si scires!* Thou wilt address Me these same words in a still more friendly tone when, after the sacrifice, Thou wilt dwell in me as a friend in the house of his friend. "Didst thou know. . . . and who it is!" Didst thou know who I am, and the value of the gift which I bring to thee! Didst thou know My love, and the designs of My charity in My visit to thee!

Eternal Wisdom, Light of light, enlighten me, purify my heart by the rays of a lively faith, *fide purificans corda*, and, when Thou shalt dwell within my soul, deign to impart to it still more enlightenment, so that I may better know and fully appreciate the value of a gift which is none else but Thyself. Henceforth, O Lord, I will allow full scope to truth, I will make Thee known to my brethren, I will teach them to love, to serve Thee, and to impart to others the gift of Thy love. Grant that my prayer be as acceptable as that of Solomon when he prayed for wisdom, and grant that Thou mayest answer me as Thou didst answer him: "Behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart." (3 Kings, iii. 12.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The work of zeal in the conversion of the Samaritan woman. I. Its activity. The zealous priest knows no rest. The good shepherd spares neither journeys nor fatigues. "It was necessary that He should pass through Samaria." He seeks, He brings about, He uses favorable occasions. II. Its discretion. Everything in that conversion is conducted with admirable wisdom. The thirst of Our Saviour furnishes a natural occasion to gain the confidence of that soul. By degrees He raises her to the knowledge of His divinity. III. Its sweetness. Although fully cognizant He pretends to ignore her sinful life, and in this manner induces her to make a full confession. *Vitia mentium sicut et corporum molliter tractanda.*

Second Point.—Success of zeal in the conversion of the Samaritan woman. The very first words of the Saviour won the confidence of the Samaritan woman. She suddenly becomes a penitent follower of Christ, an apostle. She adores Jesus Christ, and seeks eagerly to extend the knowledge of His divinity. *Si scires donum Dei.* There is a deep meaning in these words. They are intended for sinners. They very frequently may be applied to priests, especially after the holy sacrifice of the Mass.

MEDITATION LXI.

PREACHING. A PURELY DIVINE MINISTRY.

1.—*In Its Principle.*
2.—*In Its End.*
3.—*In Its Efficacy.*

First Point.—Preaching is a purely divine ministry in its origin. We have received it of God, we exercise it in His name. God Himself preaches in us and through us.

St. Paul, writing to the first Christians, led them up in spirit to the source of the instructions which He gave them. Be not deceived, I have not taught you my own gospel, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ. "I have preached to you the Gospel of God." (2 Cor. xi. 7.) In another passage he congratulates them for having received his teachings as the word of God Himself. (1 Thess. ii. 13.) This is certainly a glorious privilege of every Catholic preacher. He presents himself to men as one sent by God, and the doctrine which he teaches them in the name of this great and sovereign Lord is neither the invention of his own intellect, nor of some superior genius. It is not the teaching of man, it is the word of God.

The Saviour said to us as He did to the apostles, "Go, teach the Gospel to every creature; he that heareth you, heareth Me." To all those, therefore, to whom we are sent, whatever may be their rank and condition, we can say what the early prophets repeated so often: "Hear the word of the Lord. Hear the words of the great King. Hear you, princes, hear O house of Jacob . . . Kings of Juda. Thus says the Lord of Hosts." The greatest glory of an ordinary orator is to speak in the name of and as the defender of the interests of his prince and of his country. The sacred orator is the interpreter of the Divinity, and therefore they call him the man of God, the ambassador of Jesus Christ, the angel of peace, which are all admirable titles applied to him in the Holy Scriptures and in tradition.

"We deal with things of heaven," says Bossuet, or rather, we have no interests outside of heaven. Jesus Christ condescends to be our agent there. God, on the other hand, has interest on earth. He has souls to save, elect to gather together from all parts of the earth. He also has His agents, they are His ministers. "We are therefore ambassadors for Christ, God, as it were, exhorting by us." (2 Cor. v. 20.)

God made peace with the world, and he has deposited with us this treaty of peace. Ours is the duty of publishing, and of exhorting all nations to fulfil its conditions. "He has placed in us the word of reconciliation." (Ib. 19.) Hence came the magnificent expressions, the bold figures used by the Doctors of the Church to extol the office of preacher. Their preaching, according to St. Gregory, is like unto the army of our great King going through the whole world to conquer souls. *Dum catenis vinctus Romam peteret Paulus mundum occupaturus, latens in ejus pectore, quasi sub tentorio ibat Deus.* (Mor. 1, 27.) They are the heralds and precursors of Jesus Christ, the voice which cries out, "Prepare the way of the Lord." St. Bernard calls them, *Patres Christi generando, matres Christi pariendo.* If through faith they beget Jesus Christ in the souls, they also beget souls to Jesus Christ by introducing them into the mystical body, which is the Church. "Through the Gospel I have begot you." Oh, how much worthy of respect is this sublime function! Have I always honored it by my conduct, by the elevation of sentiments and the eminent sanctity which it supposes? Have I always made the ambassador speak worthily of the great King?

Second Point.—The ministry of the preacher is purely divine in its object. As God is its origin, God is also its object. To unite ourselves through love and obedience to Him who is our first principle and last end is our essential duty and our great honor. In this present life God seeks only to draw us back to Him, if we have strayed away by sin, or to unite us more closely to Him, if we are already in His friendship. With this end in view, He uses principally His word, which He announces to men through His ambassadors. When He looks upon the world, He sees some friends who are sincere, others who are unreliable and indifferent, and finds many open enemies. In other words, there are in the world the just, the lukewarm, the sinners. They are all in need of the divine embassy. None are excluded from its mission.

The word of God is necessary to the just that they may advance and persevere in righteousness. Progress in sanctity is necessary. Man gains strength in Christian life from the same vivifying source which gave existence to this very life. The heart of the faithful man is replete with good desires, his mind is busied with good works. These are flowers which charm the eyes of God. These are most happy and excellent results. But they are like flowers that would soon wither and die if the plentiful dew, which is the word of God, would not fall on and refresh them.

The word of God is yet more necessary to the lukewarm than to the sinners. To the former it makes tender appeals,

but also frightful threats. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first charity. Be mindful, therefore, from whence thou art fallen. . . . Because thou art lukewarm I will begin to vomit thee out of My mouth." (Apoc.) It wakes up those torpid souls from their slumber, prevents an entire separation from God, and restores them to His friendship. It is certainly a matter of surprise to see almighty God sending ambassadors to His declared enemies. Contemplate who is the offender and who the person offended. The Almighty has nothing to fear from these worms of earth who revolt against Him. He stretches His mercy to excess waiting for men. He humbles Himself so much as to offer them peace; and consider the conditions: they could not possibly be more advantageous to mankind. He prays, He urges them not to abuse His patience, and to accept a home in heaven in which to enjoy His friendship.

Thus the preaching of the word of God in every way recalls and unites men to God. Its object is consequently entirely divine. By the aid of preaching, priests calm the passions of people, stir up remorse in guilty consciences, teach truth, banish error, labor to destroy vice, to exalt virtue, and enable the God of peace and the peace of God to dwell in human hearts. Consider how admirable is our ministry. "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, of them who bring glad tidings of good things." (Rom. x. 15.) Consider how much it merits our esteem and our loyalty.

Third Point.—The ministry of the preacher is entirely divine in its efficacy. Miracles of grace have ever manifested the supernatural agency of God in the preaching of His word. In the mouth of Nathan an allegory of great simplicity becomes a flash of fire which pierces the heart of David, and makes him the model of penitents. Niniveh is saved by a warning from the prophet Jonas. Esdras had not yet commenced the interpretation of the law of God, he had merely read a few words out of the book, when the people fell on their knees, adored God, and shed tears of repentance. Wailings and lamentations are heard on all sides, and the Levites have to moderate these outbursts of feeling which drown the voice of the holy priest. "All the people wept when they heard the words of the law . . . and the Levites stilled all the people, saying: Hold your peace, . . . and be not sorrowful." (2 Esd. viii. 9, 11.) Through the preaching of the apostles, the Holy Ghost has created the world anew. "He has renewed the face of the earth." What power did those illiterate men require to subject the world to the dominion of the cross, to induce men to submit to humiliations, sacrifices; in a word, to submit to the

austere law of the Gospel? They had need of no weapons except the word of God.

Later on, it was also impossible not to recognize the power of God's word in the preaching of the Vincent Ferrers, Anthonies of Padua, the Xaviers, the Clavers, St. Francis de Sales. We see on all sides men who loved and pampered themselves, conquering themselves through the power of the word of God, becoming masters of themselves by mortification, rulers of their passions by strong efforts, laying aside and even despising the advantages of this world for the interests of God and eternity. The doctrine which we announce is ever the same, ever such as St. Paul describes it: "The word of God is living and effectual, and more precious than any two-edged sword, and reaching into the division of the soul and the spirit, of the joints also and the marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb. iv. 12.) How far does it not penetrate? Who will tell of the chains it breaks asunder, of the happy divisions and the holy unions it brings about? Is there a pastor who has not witnessed with his own eyes the accomplishment of Our Saviour's promise: "Behold, I am with you. . . . He who heareth you, heareth Me. You are not they who speak; but the spirit of the Father speaketh in you."

O Priest of God, promulgator and interpreter of His law, understand the excellence of your ministry. How have you fulfilled your duty up to this day? What have been the results of your preaching? Have you not to confess that the sacred word on your lips has not been the dew which fertilizes, the fire which gives light and also imparts unblemished radiance? If you seek a cause for your lack of success, you can not find it resulting from the word of God itself. Perhaps when you reflect over the matter seriously, you may discover that it is simply one of those trials which God sends to His most faithful servants. In this case your sorrow will always have its solace. But if your conscience reminds you of good undone, and which your preaching could accomplish, then indeed you have reason to dread the account you will have to give for so precious a talent. The Saviour whom you are about to receive at the altar will, if you beg it of Him, teach you how to handle this spiritual implement, and become the evangelical laborer St. Paul wishes you to be: "A workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. ii. 15.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The ministry of the preacher is purely divine in its principle. We have received it of God. "The Gospel of Christ

I have preached to you." A glorious privilege of the Catholic preacher! That which he announces to men is not an invention of the human mind; it is the word of God. The Saviour has said to him, He that heareth you, heareth Me. He is therefore named the ambassador of God. He exercises his ministry in the name of God. God Himself exercises it in him and through him.

Second Point.—The ministry of the word is entirely divine in its end. As it comes from God, it leads unto God. The just, the lukewarm, the sinners are all in need of it. The word of God causes the just to persevere and advance in spirituality, it wakes up the lukewarm man, prevents an entire rupture between God and Himself, it reconciles to God His open enemies. Consider, O evangelical laborers, how admirable is your ministry!

Third Point.—The ministry of preaching is purely divine in its efficacy. Wonders of grace have ever manifested the action of God in His word. Nathan, Jonas, Esdras, in days of old, and later on, the apostles, the Vincent Ferrers, the Xaviers, St. Francis de Sales, demonstrated the power of this divine word. It has lost nothing of its efficacy. O Priest of God, promulgator of His law, have you understood the excellence of your ministry? Have you performed its duties?

MEDITATION LXII.

OBLIGATION OF PREACHING.

1.—*Have I Understood the Importance of this Obligation?*
2.—*Have I Understood the Extent of this Obligation?*

First Point.—The duty of preaching is the principal duty of the priest considered as pastor. St. Thomas calls this obligation, *principalissimum officium.* Whilst it is true to say that we are saved through *faith* and the invocation of the *Lord's name* it should be remembered that faith and prayer are the result of preaching, just as streams flow from their source, for, as St. Paul says: "How, then, shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe Him of whom they have not heard, and how shall they hear without a preacher? . . . . Faith, then, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Rom. x. 14, 17.)

I. This obligation is based upon divine right. In all past ages God sent His ambassadors to men. He speaks to them today through His priests, as He did formerly through His prophets. The obligation which was laid on the prophets is the same as that

which is laid on the priests. And this obligation binds under the same penalties. "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet." (Is. lxviii. 1.) "Thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak." (Jer. i. 7.) "When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die,—if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked man from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but I shall require his blood at thy hand." (Ezech. xxxiii. 8.)

Jesus Christ gives to His ministers the mission He received from His Father, and declares that His mission is that of preaching the Gospel. "As the Father sent Me, I also send you." (Joan. xx. 21.) "He sent Me to preach the Gospel to the poor." (Luc. iv. 18.) "Let us go into the neighboring towns and cities, that I may preach there also, for to this purpose I am come." (Marc. i. 38.) Immediately before going up to heaven, He again promulgates this great law of preaching. Consider the circumstances with which He invests this command, with what pomp, with what majesty of language. It is the last word to those whom He has commissioned to continue His work. O Apostles, O Priests, can you ever forget this command? "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth." The universe is mine as my inheritance. I have already conquered heaven by My labors and My sufferings, but the earth I have yet to conquer, and on you I depend to subject it to My law. "Go, therefore, teach all nations, preach the Gospel to every creature."

The apostles understand the obligation laid on them. "But they, going forth, preached everywhere." (Marc. xvi. 20.) They are forbidden to preach, they are threatened, but this they do not mind. "We must obey God rather than man." (Acts, v. 29.) St. Paul will in no way accept the praise of man for his zeal in preaching the Gospel; He looks upon it as a matter of necessity to which He submits: "Necessity lieth upon me." He pronounces against himself a sort of anathema if he should ever come to neglect so sacred a duty. "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." What points does he chiefly insist upon in his letters to Timothy and Titus, which are, as it were, the manual of the apostolic and pastoral life? Preaching: He charges them, and in their persons all the pastors of souls, by all that is most holy and terrible, by the presence of God and of Jesus Christ, who shall judge the living and the dead, by His coming, His eternal kingdom, to preach the divine word in season and out of season, to use in preaching it all the means of persuasion which an ardent charity will suggest, such as discussions, prayers, reproofs, unalterable patience. "I charge thee before God and Jesus Christ, who shall judge the

living and the dead, by His coming and His kingdom, preach the word, be instant in season and out of season, reprove, entreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine." (2 Tim. iv. 1, 2.) In considering this text St. Augustine exclaims: *Quis sub tanta testificatione segnis esse audeat?*

II. An obligation imposed by the law of the Church. One of the canons attributed to the apostles prescribes that if a priest having charge of souls neglects to give them the bread of the word of God, he himself shall be deprived of the Eucharistical bread; should he persevere in his criminal silence, he shall be deprived of his office. The history of the Church testifies that preaching has ever been the object of her solicitude. She mentions it continually in the decrees of her Councils. The Council of Trent sums up all the traditions in the following words, which we ought to consider carefully: *Statuit ac decrevit sancta synodus ut quicumque parochiales, vel alias curam animarum habentes ecclesias obtinent, per se, vel alios idoneos, si legitime impediti fuerint, diebus saltem dominicis et festis solemnibus, plebes sibi commissas pro sua et earum capacitate pascant salutaribus verbis docendo quae scire omnibus necessarium est ad salutem.* (Sess. v. l. 2.) The Council goes further; it places in the hands of the bishop the thunderbolts of the Church, and wishes them to inflict curses on those mute priests whom the Spirit of God stigmatizes as "Dumb dogs not able to bark." (Is. lvi. 10.) This is well-deserved severity, for the standard of faith and of other virtues among men, rises or falls according to the greater or lesser fidelity of priests to preach the word of God.

III. An obligation based upon the law of nature. "Thou shalt not kill." What difference is there between the negligent pastor who does not preach and the scandalous pastor who kills the soul? It is exactly the same which exists between the unnatural mother who refuses to feed her infant, and thereby permits it to die, and the heartless mother who kills it in her womb. Hence the Church inserted in her laws the following sentence: *Tacendo pastor occidit.* "Thou shalt not steal." On what ground can I refuse to lead to the pasture the flock which affords me food and raiment? By not preaching I should be dishonest, as the professor of sciences and *belles lettres* who would remain silent in his chair; with this difference, that my fault would be much more grievous than his, religious truths being so far superior to scientific and literary knowledge. How could I dare to take a salary allowed to me as a pastor, if I refuse to act as pastor? *Pastor a pascendo.*

My first duty, then, is to preach, to catechise, to instruct. Preaching, as the apostles have taught us, must go before the

care of the poor itself; the former duty is based on justice, the latter on charity. "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." (Acts, vi. 2.) In the matter of preaching, may I not have adopted ideas that ought to be changed, and been guilty of faults to be much regretted?

Second Point.—Extent of this obligation. It is quite certain that this obligation can not be fulfilled by every kind of preaching. It requires zeal, study, and sincerity. A Council of Paris, after citing the words already quoted—"When I say to the wicked man, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die. . . If thou dost not speak he shall die. . . but I shall require his blood at thy hand"—raises a cry of alarm well calculated to disturb the false peace of certain pastors. *Ecce quale periculum praedicatoribus, nisi strenue utiliterque praedicaverint!*

It therefore suffices not merely to preach. I will not escape the danger mentioned unless I preach *strenue utiliterque.* But now is there any force, any fervor of charity, is there any real utility in those unprepared, uninteresting exhortations in which the preacher is apparently as cold and indifferent as his hearers? As I am responsible for all the souls confided to my care, I must vary the subject and form of my instructions according to their different spiritual wants. I must feed the young with the milk of simple instructions, the strong with the bread of more solid instructions. I should instruct all classes, all conditions, all the persons. Those whom my voice can not reach I must try to have instructed by others, and if there are some who can not come to public instructions, I must endeavor to visit and instruct them in private interviews. *Publice et per domos.*

Oh, how many of my brethren are lost, either because they have never learned, or because they have forgotten the truths necessary to salvation! Woe to me if in my parish a child, an old or infirm person be deprived of the sacraments because of my neglect to prepare them for their reception, by not giving them the proper instruction. For this I should have to answer soul for soul, blood for blood. "But his blood I will require at thy hands." I must make myself all to all, cost what it will, so that there may not be one sheep or one lamb in my flock which is not the object of my pastoral solicitude.

Let us deeply consider the following words of St. Gregory: *Ad messem multam operarii pauci sunt, quod sine gravi maerore loqui non possumus; nam etsi sunt qui bona audiant, desunt qui dicant. Ecce mundus sacerdotibus plenus est, sed tamen in messe Dei rarus valde reperitur operator: quia officium quidem sacerdotale suscepimus, sed opus officii non implemus. Relinquunt Deum hi qui nobis com-*

missi sunt, et tacemus: in pravis actibus, jacent et correptionis manum non tendimus; quotidie per multas nequitias pereunt et eos ad inferrum tendere negligenter videmus. (In Evang. l. 1, hom. 17.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Preaching the first obligation of the pastor. I. A duty imposed by the law of God. God nowadays speaks to men through His priests as he did under the Old Law through the prophets. Jesus has given them the mission He received from His Father, and declares that this mission was to preach. The apostles understood well this obligation. St. Paul pronounces against himself a sort of anathema if he should ever happen to neglect it. "Woe is unto me if I preach not the Gospel." Of this sacred duty he continually reminds Titus, Timothy, and the other pastors. II. The law of the Church requires it. This obligation is contained in the canons attributed to the apostles. The Council of Trent strictly insists upon it. III. It is the law of nature. "Thou shalt not kill." *Tacendo pastor occidit.* "Thou shalt not steal." Whoever fails in this duty sins against justice.

Second Point.—Extent of this obligation. It is not fulfilled by every kind of preaching. The pastor must preach *strenue utiliterque*, vary the subject and style of his instructions according to the spiritual wants of his hearers. To the children he should give milk, to the strong he should give bread. He should preach to all. *Publice et per domos.*

MEDITATION LXIII.

GOOD PREACHING.

1.—*Jesus Christ Teaches us the Matter we should Preach.*
2.—*Teaches us by His Example the Manner of Preaching.*

First Point.—Jesus Christ teaches what we must preach. An ambassador acts conformably to the instructions he has received, treats with tact and ability the affairs placed in his hands. The mission of the priest is to preach the Gospel. "Preach the Gospel, teach all nations, teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Every preacher must say of Jesus, who sends him, that which Jesus said of His Father, "That which I heard of Him, the same I speak in the world." (Joan. viii. 26.) The saving of man was the end which the Son of God proposed to Himself when He instituted the ministry of the word,

and, as a consequence, the subject matter of preaching is that which is either necessary or useful to the salvation of men.

In the first place, that which is *necessary* as a *means* or by *virtue of a precept. Docendo ea quae scire omnibus necessarium est ad salutem.* (C. Trid.) O Priest, are you not laboring under an illusion regarding the real wants of those who listen to you? At a time when religious instruction was more common than in our days, a celebrated author (Fleury) wrote as follows:—"They who have some experience in ecclesiastical functions, and are somewhat zealous for the salvation of souls, are much pained at seeing the ignorance of the greater portion of Christians. The poorly instructed in our dogmas and rules of morality are not exclusively the lower classes, but often men of the world, otherwise well instructed and of refined manners, nay, sometimes men of letters are sadly deficient in religious knowledge." To preach without instructing is to elude, not to accomplish the precept; to preach on grand topics to those who lack elementary instruction is like giving to a man food agreeable indeed to the palate, but devoid of the nutritious qualities necessary for sustaining life.

What should we preach if we desire the Saviour to acknowledge us for His mouthpieces? Doctrine. It is the foundation of the moral law. Without it the moral law is destitute of authority; when, however, it leans upon doctrine it assumes an imposing and holy majesty. God has taught us holy doctrine; Jesus Christ sanctions it by His examples, and His mysteries persuade us to observe it more forcibly than all the arguments which could be used. The moral law is to be preached. Since salvation can be obtained only by the doing of good works, the good preacher makes all the efforts of his ministry tend to the reformation of morals according to this prescription of the Council of Trent: *Docendo . . . vitia quæ eos declinare, virtutes quas sectari oporteat, ut poenam aeternam evadere et coelestem gloriam consequi valeant.* The eternal truths should be preached. Bourdaloue is not the only sacred author who on his death-bed regretted not having more frequently exposed those truths, which so much affect the heart of man, and leave within it such deep and durable impressions. It was at this fountain that apostolic men imbibed those striking orations which moved the nations to compunction and to conversion. Explain the whole economy of religion according to a settled methodical plan, if possible. Christianity does not consist in this or that isolated truth merely; it is an admirable structure of doctrine in which everything is connected and perfectly united together.

Let us, above all, preach Jesus Christ Himself, and Him cru-

cified. "But we preach Jesus Christ crucified." (1 Cor. i. 23.) Let us make Him known to the world such as the prophets had announced Him, such as He revealed Himself by his doctrine, His virtues, His miracles, by His life and by His death. Such are the subjects which they expect us to preach, and not philosophical propositions, a teaching merely human and almost profane. Would this be fulfilling the mission of the preacher? Would this be preaching the Gospel? "Preach the Gospel."

Second Point.—Jesus Christ shows by His example in what manner we ought to preach. In all the preachings of Jesus Christ the virtues of zeal, patience, sweetness, and prudence appeared most conspicuous, because He was animated and guided in all things by the Spirit of God. To Himself He had applied the words of Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me; wherefore. . . . to preach the Gospel to the poor He has sent Me"; and the sacred writer is careful to record, that if He passes from one place to another to carry the light of the Gospel, He thus simply follows the guidings of the Holy Spirit. "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee." (Luc. iv. 14.) It is the Spirit which induces him to preach in the synagogues, to travel through cities and provinces, there to spread the sacred fire which He brought down from heaven and which He wishes to consume the whole earth. "And He was preaching in their synagogues. Let us go in the neighboring towns and cities that I may preach there also." This same spirit gives so much force to His sermons that His enemies are forced to confess that never had a man spoken as He did. He continues His ministry of preaching, undaunted by the widespread opposition of His enemies, and by the knowledge of the lack of success which His zealous efforts had good reason to expect.

Nothing wears out the patience of Jesus; He ever remains meek and humble of heart. If multitudes press upon Him to hear the word of God, and almost prevent Him from breathing freely (*comprimebant eum*), He simply enters a ship, has it somewhat removed from the land, and from thence continues to instruct them. Admire His prudence in suiting His instructions to the temper, the dispositions, the needs of His hearers. When speaking to the doctors of the law, He uses more cogent arguments, because they were capable of following them. He convinces them by the Scriptures: "Search the Scriptures." But there is nothing so simple as His language when He addresses the common people. It consists of short, easily retained sentences of familiar comparisons borrowed from objects which they all had under their eyes, viz., the vineyard, the seeds, the fig tree, the sheep, the

flowers of the fields. He always suits His language to the capacity of His hearers. *Pro ut poterant audire.* Such was the method followed by Jesus Christ, the apostles, and all the holy preachers. Has it been mine?

As a preparation for your Mass, and in your thanksgiving, pray Our Lord Jesus Christ to be always with you, so that the virtue of the Holy Spirit may be felt by your hearers in every one of your words, and that you may worthily and usefully exercise the important ministry of preaching the word of God. *Dominus sit in corde meo et in labiis meis, ut digne et competenter annuntiem Evangelium. Amen!*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ teaches us what the subject of our preaching should be. The mission of the priest is to preach the Gospel. "Preach the Gospel." The salvation of men was the object the Saviour had in view when He instituted the ministry of the word. Teach the essentials of Christian doctrine. How many there are who are ignorant of them! Teach the *dogma*, which is the foundation of the moral law; what is to be done, what is to be avoided; the last ends; the economy of the Christian religion; above all, Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Second Point.—Jesus Christ teaches us the manner of preaching. In all the discourses of Our Lord, zeal, patience, and prudence shine conspicuously, because the Spirit of God always animated and guided Him. Nothing wears out His patience, He ever remains meek and humble of heart. Admire with what prudence He suits His instructions to the temper, the disposition, the spiritual wants of His hearers. *Pro ut poterant audire.*

MEDITATION LXIV.

THE PREACHER OUGHT TO BE A MAN OF PRAYER AND MEDITATION. THIS TRUTH IS DEMONSTRATED.

1.—*By Scripture and Tradition.*

2.—*By the Sentiment and Practice of all Good Preachers.*

3.—*By the Very Nature of Preaching.*

First Point.—Scripture and tradition. The prophets of old spoke to men only after consulting God concerning matters they had to announce. "Thou shalt hear the word out of my mouth, and shall tell it them from Me." (Ezech. iii. 17.) The apostles,

taught by Jesus Christ, united prayer to preaching as two things which are inseparable; in such a way, however, that they gave the first place to prayer, as to the source whence useful preaching must flow. "We will give ourselves entirely to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." (Acts, vi. 4.) St. Paul took God to witness that he ceased not to pray for the salvation of those whom His providence had trusted to his care. "God is my witness, . . . that without ceasing I make commemoration of you." (Rom. i. 9.) He earnestly requests the faithful to join in prayer with him so that his preachings may be blessed. "That I may open my mouth with confidence to make known the mystery of the Gospel." (Eph. vi. 19.) "Praying withal for us also, that God may open unto us a door of speech to speak the mystery of Christ. . . that I make it manifest as I ought to speak." (Col. iv. 3, 4.) "Pray for us that the word of God may run and may be glorified." (2 Thess. iii. 1.) Will any preacher persuade himself that he has less need of prayer than St. Paul, who had been taken up to the third heaven and instructed directly by God Himself?

The Doctors of the Church insist on this point. Let us hear St. Gregory: *Prius aurem cordis aperiat voci Creatoris, et postmodum os sui corporis aperiat auribus plebis.* (Ezech. l. i. Hom. 1.) St. Thomas teaches that, *Ex plentitudine contemplationis praedicatio derivatur.* (I. i. p. 188, art. 6.) Pious prayers, says St. Augustine, are more necessary to the ministry of the word of God than all the resources of the oratorial art. *Pietate magis orationum, quam oratorum facultate indiget.* Before assuming the office of teacher of the people, let the preacher first take the part of a suppliant of God. *Sit orator antequam doctor.* Let his prayer become more fervent as the time for preaching draws nearer, so that his discourse may be an out-pouring of the holy affections conceived in meditation. *Priusquam exerat proferentem linguam, ad Deum levet animam sitientem, ut eructet quod biberit, vel quod impleverit fundat,* and the possible reason of this precept he states as follows: *Quis novit, quid ad praesens tempus dicere expediat, nisi qui corda omnium novit? et quis facit ut quod oportet, et quemadmodum oportet, dicatur a nobis, nisi in cujus manu sunt et nos et sermones nostri?* (St. Aug. l. 4, de doct. Chris.) Grant, O my God, that this truth may penetrate the hearts of Thy ministers, and we shall always see its wonderful results for the glory of Thy name and the sanctification of Thy people.

Second Point.—The opinion and practice of all the good preachers have always confirmed this teaching. "The first advice which I have to give you to enable you to win success in preaching

is to *pray well;* the second is to pray well; the third, the fou th, the tenth, is to pray well,"—thus wrote the distinguished Father Lejeune. "The ministers of God," says Bossuet, "have two principal duties to fulfil: they must speak to the people in teaching; they must speak to God in *prayer.*" O you priests who are the angels of the God of Hosts, you should unceasingly ascend to and descend from heaven like the angels whom Jacob saw in the desert. You ascend from the earth to heaven in meditation by uniting your souls to God; you descend from heaven to earth when you announce to men God's holy will. Ascend and descend, therefore, unceasingly; that is, pray and preach. Speak to God, speak to men. Ascend in spirit to the throne of God, then descend to shed His light on men. Drink at the very fountain-head of grace, and then let the celestial water irrigate the earth to enable it to produce spiritual harvests. "I am not surprised that this faithful servant of God [meaning Father Bourgoing] preached with such unction the doctrine of Jesus Christ upon which he had so deeply meditated. We give Thee thanks, O God eternal, for having imparted to this man so much zeal, unction, mildness, and strength,"—thus spoke the learned Bossuet in his panegyric of Father Bourgoing.

All the men of God chosen for the accomplishment of great things are unanimous in stating that *prayer* is the real source of Christian eloquence. They were also, however, most faithful to practise what they preached. After hours and even nights spent in prayer, they were wont to go into the pulpit to preach. Then "the word of God fell from their lips full of life, full of unction, and full of sacred fire. Their sermons were less the result of a slow, protracted study than the emanation of celestial fervor, of a holy impulse and momentary inspiration." (Ib.) They filled their own souls with graces derived from prayer. Then, like St. Peter of old, being "once converted, they could confirm their brethren." The real cause of their success was their continual union with God. Need it now be asked why the word of God, which in their hands was a two-edged sword, and the instrument of so many victories gained over hell, is in my hands only a blunted weapon, incapable of inflicting wholesome wounds on souls? What is a preacher without the spirit of prayer? "A sounding brass, a tinkling cymbal." (1 Cor. xiii. 1.)

Third Point.—The very nature of preaching requires the spirit of prayer. The great Apostle has laid down before us the motives which obliged him to pray and to ask prayers of others for the success of his preaching. Prayer prepares the way for the word of God, destroys the obstacles impeding its spread—*Ut*

sermo Dei currat—and imparts that power which operates miracles of grace; *et clarificetur*. It belongs to God to open the lips of the preacher, to inspire him with confidence, to teach him how to announce the Gospel with efficacy. *Ut detur sermo in operatione oris mei cum fiducia notum facere mysterium Evangelii . . . ita ut oportet me loqui*. He alone knows the dispositions, the spiritual wants of the hearers, and as a consequence He alone knows the word which for them is to be the word of salvation. He alone can put it on the lips of His minister, but to Him also it belongs to open the intellects and the hearts of the hearers, and to subdue their minds, for, unfortunately, all do not obey the Gospel.

Preaching is a work of zeal, of self-denial, a work of love for God and for our neighbor. In meditation this love is first excited. "In my meditation a fire shall start up." (Ps. xxviii. 4.) At the end of a good meditation we appreciate the importance of the ministry of preaching the word of God. We find interiorly an ardent, a holy desire of saving souls whose infinite value has been made known to us by the tears and blood of Jesus Christ. We have no other desire than to preach a useful sermon, instead of seeking for subtle arguments or nicely rounded periods; and we are freed from the anxious thoughts suggested by self-love which deprives us of half our energy and influence over an audience.

What should be the object of our preaching? It does not consist in merely convincing the minds of men, but more particularly in moving their hearts. The heart once touched, the will is easily conquered. Chains of sin are broken asunder, sacrifices are readily made, and virtue becomes triumphant. The heart consequently needs a healthful heat and action; its noble aspirations require encouragement, guilty consciences should be terrified, and souls should receive such deep impressions as to produce an immediate and determined action. *Frustra persuadetur verum esse quod dicitur, frustra placet modus quo dicitur, si non ita dicatur, ut agatur.* (St. Aug. l. iv. de doct. Ch.) To speak to the heart the language must necessarily come from the heart. To convince others we must be thoroughly convinced ourselves. *Qui non ardet non incendit*, says St. Gregory. If a priest be deeply imbued with the truths he teaches, his mind, his gestures, his very features, as well as his words communicate his own convictions to his hearers. Nothing touches hearts so soon as the appearance, the earnestness of a man who is visibly moved himself. And only prayer—oral and mental—will infuse into us that holy ardor which gives life to our preaching. By pouring the abundance of Thy graces into the hearts of those whom Thou sendest to conquer souls, Thou, O Lord, dost

make them the instruments of Thy wonderful mercy in the preaching of the Gospel. Only to men of prayer dost Thou grant the privilege of proclaiming Thy law in a holy manner. As they seek not their own advancement, but Thy glory, they receive their inspirations from Thee alone. Thou speakest through their mouth, Thou sanctifiest men through their ministry. In the treasure of Thy truth they find the light which enlighteneth the blind, and in Thy love the breath of life which raises up the dead. Impart to me, O my God, the spirit of prayer. Grant that I may prize and fervently practise an exercise most necessary to him who must be both a saint and a teacher of sanctity. Implant in my soul the habit of praying before, during, and after the sermon, that I may be ever united to Thee. Then in a measure I shall be a creator with Thee, and Thy powerful word, which Thou wilt announce Thyself through my ministry, will sooner or later give new life to the spiritual field confided to my care. *Emitte Spiritum tuum, et creabuntur, et renovabis faciem terrae.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Scripture and tradition demonstrate that the preacher should be a man of prayer. The prophets and the apostles united together prayer and preaching as things inseparable. The Doctors of the Church acted the part of suppliants with God before they undertook the duty of teaching men. *Quis novit quid ad praesens tempus dicere expediat, nisi qui corda omnium novit?*

Second Point.—The same confirmed by the sentiments and practice of good preachers. They proclaimed prayer the source of good preaching. In order to move their hearers they filled themselves with the grace derived from prayer. Without it the preacher is simply *Aes sonans, aut cymbalum tinniens.*

Third Point.—The nature of preaching demands it. Prayer prepares the way for the word of God, destroys obstacles. God knows the dispositions and wants of the hearers; knows how they should be addressed. His benediction will bring about success. Preaching is a work of zeal. "In my meditation a fire shall flame out."

MEDITATION LXV.

PREPARATION FOR PREACHING.

1.—*Its Importance.*
2.—*Nature of this Preparation.*

First Point.—The Church was established and is preserved by the ministry of preaching. It is the origin of the supernatural and Christian life of man. It places effectually before us the most important and desirable blessings, viz., the glory of God and the salvation of souls. To ask, then, if I must prepare myself to perform this most important function is equivalent to asking if it be allowable to tempt God, to endanger the respect due His holy word, to put in jeopardy the success of the great mission He has intrusted to me.

What, then, is preaching without preparation? We do not refer to those cases of necessity which entitle a priest to a particular assistance from heaven and to the indulgence of his hearers. We refer to those occasions when a priest has time and fails to make due preparation. We answer that it is to expect God to perform a miracle, to encourage rashness, to reward negligence. It is to rashly hope that God will instruct, move, change the minds and hearts of people in a sermon generally devoid of all the elements necessary to produce the above results, viz., order, solidity, unction. We answer that it is certainly tempting God. The priest runs the risk of losing himself in incoherencies perceptible even to his hearers, of making unnecessary and even offensive repetitions, of wandering into useless explanations, of making use of incorrect expressions, or of coarse, commonplace language. This is manifesting a disrespect for the sacred word of God. It is a lowering of the holy ministry in the minds of the hearers, and of all those to whom they may speak. By lack of preparation the priest gives people a distaste for the heavenly bread necessary for the sustenance of life, and a dislike for religious practices. This is casting discredit on the great King whose ambassador the priest is. It is compromising the success of his sublime embassy.

If not thoroughly prepared, the sermons of the priest will be devoid of the qualities indispensable to successful preaching. For his instructions will be *inaccurate*. He will say too much or too little. Even the most talented speakers can not always, on the instant, find words best adapted to express a truth. We often hear

bold and unsound expressions hastily uttered in making necessary explanations. The unprepared speaker does not deserve, then, the praise bestowed upon Our Lord: *Magister, viam Dei in veritate doces.* Master, Thou dost truly teach the way of God. Can it be said that my teaching is sound, that it is irreproachable?

If the priest is not prepared, ideas and language will be *wanting in precision.* Preparation is required to eliminate from a sermon everything foreign to a subject, everything that obscures instead of making clear. To be precise is not easy for one who has not thoroughly mastered his subject.

Without preparation a preacher can not attract or interest his people. Good extempore speaking supposes a very rare talent. To be able to develop prominent facts and statements, to use apt and natural comparisons, to have everything in order and expressed in pure, polished, yet plain language, and to keep up the attention of the hearers by appropriate illustrations and anecdotes, is a talent granted to few. It is an accomplishment gained only by study and preparation. Hence it happens that we are obliged frequently to listen to long, tiresome, and fruitless exhortations. This gives reason to the saying that "it costs much to listen to a sermon which costs the preacher nothing." Every preacher should feel it his duty to find the time and means so much required in the preparation of a sermon; the same law which obliges him to preach imposes upon him the obligation of preaching in a manner becoming to his holy office.

Second Point.—Nature of this preparation. This preparation consists chiefly in a careful study of the subject to be treated, and in being so spiritually disposed as to be fit intermediaries between man and the divine mercy.

I. Although we know that the action of God is entirely independent of our efforts, and that He sanctifies souls in ways mysterious to us, yet He wishes His ministers to make use of the ordinary channels of grace established by Providence. St. Paul says that God saw fit to impart faith and salvation to man through the foolishness of preaching. (1 Cor. i. 25.) He wishes also that our preaching be holy and prudent, that it be the result of study and labor. In the very earliest days of the Church, when all the preachers were distinguished by the miracles they performed, even then St. Paul commanded Timothy to be very careful to educate himself to enable him to instruct others. "Till I come, attend unto reading, to exhortation and to doctrine." (1 Tim. iv. 13.) He feels himself the need of reading over his books, and he commands his disciple to bring them to him. (Ib.) The subject of the sermon is to be thoroughly investigated. This will enable the

speaker to become the master of his subject, and to handle it skilfully. He can arrange and compare all its parts, he can embellish or simplify it, he can extend or curtail it to suit the capacity and needs of his auditors.

II. We should endeavor to make ourselves the fit instruments of God's grace. Jesus Christ is about to speak through our lips. It is our duty to join ourselves to Him, to adopt His spirit. Then through us He will accomplish His designs of mercy on our brethren. We should forget ourselves and adopt His most holy thoughts and intentions. We should abandon self-love and make our hearts a dwelling delightful to Him by its purity and innocence. Whatever the past may have been, let sin be henceforth banished. It would be most commendable before preaching to recite the fervent prayer which we say before the reading of the Gospel: *Munda cor meum ac labia mea qui labia Isaiae prophetae calculo mundasti ignito.* Before his sermon, says St. Francis de Sales, the preacher ought to have confessed his sins and said Mass or received holy communion. "It is incredible," says St. John Chrysostom," how the devil dreads the preaching of him who has received Jesus Christ; the preacher is endowed with much more confidence, more earnestness, more light." *Disce per orationem: invoca me, et veniet in te Spiritus sapientiae. Disce per studium: scrutare Scripturas, ibi invenies jacula. . . Imple ergo cor tuum eloquiis meis, ut ex abundantia cordis os loquatur. . . . Cum cathedram ascensurus es, cogita me esse praesentem; me, Verbum aeternum, voce tua uti ad salvandas animas. Sis quasi unum mecum esses, cum spiritu meo, cum charitate mea, cum potestate mea.* (Men. vit. sac. c. 53.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—We should make careful preparation. To ask if it be necessary to prepare sermons is tantamount to asking if it be allowable to tempt God, to endanger the respect due His holy word, to overthrow the foundation on which rests the edifice of religion. Without preparation the priest is liable to lack accuracy, precision, and ability to instruct his hearers. The same law which obliges the priest to preach, implies the obligation of appropriateness, piety, and usefulness in his sermons.

Second Point.—Nature of this preparation. The priest should study his subject thoroughly and have the spiritual dispositions required of him by God. Preaching not based on study and labor manifests imprudence on the part of the preacher. St. Paul recommends to Timothy to educate himself in order to instruct others. The preacher should do everything he can to become a worthy instrument of God's mercy. For this purpose he should

forget himself, adopt the spirit of his Saviour, give himself up entirely to His guidance. *Disce per orationem: invoca me, et veniet in te Spiritus sapientiae. . . Imple cor tuum eloquiis divinis, ut ex abundantia cordis os loquatur.*

MEDITATION LXVI.

SEEKING SELF-GLORY IN PREACHING.

1.—*It is a Great Sin.*
2.—*How to Guard against this Temptation.*

First Point.—To preach from motives of vanity is a great sin. It is to offend God in the discharge of a duty whose principal object is the promotion of God's glory. It is an injury to our fellow beings and to the preacher himself.

I. It is an offence against God. The priest is the ambassador of God, delegated to conquer those souls who have shaken off the yoke of God's service, to bring into submission those who have refused obedience to God's laws. . Unfortunately, however, he listens to the suggestions of vain-glory, and yields to the desire of praise; the ambassador himself rebels against his sovereign Lord. It looks as if he wished to supplant Him, as if he would occupy His place in men's esteem. He imitates Judas in a certain way. For this apostle sought sordid, worldly gain in the exercise of his duty, and the preacher's unholy ambition is to promote the interest of his own vanity. He is more intent on winning a reputation as a brilliant orator, than to win soldiers to the standard of Jesus Christ. He abuses the sanctity of the pulpit by using the throne of the Gospel as the seat of vanity, as the pedestal for his own ambition. "He dishonors his dignity," says Bossuet, "so far as to make the duty of preaching subservient to his desire of pleasing. He does not blush to purchase flattery with the word of truth; he procures adulation, which is the food of a frivolous mind, with the solid and substantial nourishment of doctrine which God prepared for His children. This conduct is certainly dishonorable. It is an indignity cast upon the preaching of Jesus Christ."

It is certainly an abuse of the divine word when it becomes a medium for the preacher to win the admiration and praise of men instead of gaining souls to God. "Adulterating the Word of God." (2 Cor. iv. 2.) *Adulterare verbum Dei est, ex eo non spirituales fructus quaerere, sed adulterinos fructus laudis humanae.* (St. Greg.) Of such a preacher St. Jerome says: *Nomen Dei despicit, panem*

polluit doctrinarum, et in ipsum Deum jacit contumelias. (In Mal. c. i.)

II. It is injurious to our fellow beings. Can we imagine a father hurrying to the rescue of his children exposed to some imminent danger, and manifesting less concern about the welfare of his children than a desire of winning the applause of the beholders? His efforts to save the children prove futile; he, however, consoles himself by the thought that his remarkable skill has gained him the good-will and praise of the spectators. What should be thought of such a man? Certainly a cry of indignation would go up from the crowd at the sight of such inhumanity. Such, however, is undoubtedly the conduct of a vain, selfish preacher. Although he be the spiritual father of the people, bound to snatch his children from the horrors of eternal torments, he bestows less thought upon his duty than upon himself and his accomplishments. He manifests no charity, not even compassion. There is certainly no healthy food for souls in sermons prepared to feed the pride of him who preaches.

The only fruitful preaching is that which the Lord blesses, and we know that God has nothing but maledictions in reserve for the proud and haughty. "He shall be filled with maledictions." (Ecclus. x. 15.) From the moment that a preacher prefers the flattery of men to the esteem of God, he ceases to labor for God. His sermons will no longer be prepared and written with a view to give genuine Christian instructions and bring souls to the way of light; they are above the intelligence of most of his hearers. The preacher, however, seems to be quite indifferent. *Non illos appetit erudire sed se ostendere; nec, intuetur quam justi qui audiunt fiant, sed ipse quam doctus, cum auditur, appareat.* (St. Greg.) St. Isidore sums up as follows the qualities of a good discourse: *Sermo debet esse purus, simplex, apertus, plenus gravitatis et honestatis, plenus suavitatis et gratiae.* (Offic. l. ii, c. v.)

The vain preacher makes sacred oratory pander to his love for admiration; and far from adding solidness to piety, he undermines piety. His vanity is so patent to all eyes, that people begin to question whether he really believes in his own words.

III. Moreover, it is injurious to the preacher himself. According to Scripture and the Fathers, preachers of the word of God are the husbandmen of eternity. *Satores aeternitatis.* By implanting the fear of God in the hearts of men, giving them a desire for heavenly things, they prepare a plentiful harvest. But if they allow themselves to be governed by desire of human glory instead of being influenced by motives of faith, what harvest can they gather after all their toil? Nothing but the sad reflection of time and labor lost, not to speak of the imminent danger of losing their

souls. *Praedicator qui sibi plausum quaerit, non conversionem populi. . . . damnabitur; tum quia praedicationis officio ad laudem, non Dei, sed suam, abusus est; tum quia vanam gloriam sibi finem ultimum praefixit; tum quia salutem tot animarum sibi creditam impedivit et evertit.* (Corn. á Lap. in Luc., c. vi.) Let us conclude with St. Lawrence Justinian: *Odibilis plane Deo res, ex sermonibus sacris vulgarem famam appetere, Christoque neglecto, in affectibus mortalium se velle imprimere. Talis. . . . adulter est, sui conditoris raptor gloriae, et animae suae crudelissimus interemptor.* (De. instit. et reg. Prael. c. vii.) How great must be the distress of such a preacher's soul at the judgment-seat of God!

Second Point.—How priests should guard against vanity in their sermons. Let us, first of all, be convinced that this temptation is pleasing and seductive, and that most holy priests are liable to its attacks. On one occasion Jesus Christ manifested fear about His disciples; it was when He saw them elated over the success of their missionary tour and the happy results of their first labors. (Luke, x. 17, 18.) St. Gregory the Great says of himself in the last chapter of his morals: "If I look into my heart to examine the intention which leads me to compose this book, I see that I undertook it with a view of pleasing God, but I must acknowledge that at times there are united to this first intention other views which are less disinterested, and a certain desire of human glory which almost imperceptibly glides into my mind, just as the midnight robber enters a house to rob and pillage." It is certainly a rare sight to behold a man concealing himself so well as to allow Jesus Christ to appear solely in the minister, the priest in the man, the apostle in the preacher.

II. Let us meditate on the advice of St. Francis Xavier to Father Barzee: "As I continually hear people praising your success, I fear that your success in pleasing the world so much may induce you not to forget yourself. Nothing belongs to you in your ministry save the faults you yourself commit. Be, however, convinced of this, that if God imparts to your sermons vigor and light, it is not a favor granted to your own merits, but to the prayers of the Church and the piety of the people. Remember that you shall have to render to God a strict account of this gift of eloquence which has been bestowed upon you for the benefit of others. Compare the result of your sermons with the much more plentiful success which would have attended your efforts if your own imperfections had not been an obstacle to the designs of God's goodness. Recall to mind so many eloquent men, who, after delivering so many admirable sermons, well calculated to do good to the people, became castaways for no other reason than that they lacked

humility. Their sermons were replete with eloquence and learning, yet they have been cast into hell, because they assumed to themselves the merit and glory which belong to God alone."

III. A preacher must be on his guard always. He must often renew the purity of his intentions, so as not to allow a gesture, a word, a sentence which would draw upon himself the attention or admiration of his hearers. The very applause which a preacher receives ought to urge him to make an act of humility; for this very applause is in many cases a proof of the failure of the sermon. Let it always be remembered that the essentia object of preaching is the improvement of the hearers. If they receive impressions which will lead to their conversion, they will have some other matter for thought than the eloquence of the preacher. *Lacrymae audientium plausus sint tui.* (St. Hier. ad Nep.)

St. Paul did not fear that the Christians would deny his statement when he wrote to them, "We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ." Does my manner of preaching allow me to safely make the same statement? Have I not sometimes, in my sermons, suggested to them the thought, "There is a priest who preaches himself, or at least who does not quite forget himself in his preaching?"

In a few moments, O my soul, we shall become the tabernacle of Jesus Christ. When the angels shall sing around us, "Rejoice and praise, O thou habitation of Sion, for great is He that is in the midst of thee, the holy One of Israel." (Is. xii. 6.) Let us listen to this God so great and good addressing to us this paternal exhortation: *Non in persuasibilibus humanae sapientiae verbis, sed in virtute Dei, praedica, fili. Non misi te ut mirentur te, sed ut per te convertantur ad me. Non sermones prurientes auribus, sed corda penetrantes edidi ego, dum inter homines versarer; abnega te ipsum, fili, et sequere me. Quaere gloriam meam, quaere proximi salutem; nihil dicas quod ad hos fines non tendat.* (Mem. c. 53.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—To preach through vanity is a great sin. It is an offence against God. It injures our fellow beings and ourselves. To purchase flattery with the word of truth is to usurp God's place in the esteem of men. This is the language of St. Jerome: *Nomen Dei despicere, panem polluere doctrinarum et in ipsum Deum facere contumelias.* The priest is the spiritual father of his people—why should he manifest less interest in their salvation than in his own glorification? A vain priest does not aim in his sermons at instructing or exhorting his people. He weakens instead of strengthens their piety. They begin to consider him a

frivolous man. What is the result of his labor? *Qui sibi plausum quaerit . . , damnabitur . . . tum quia vanam gloriam sibi finem ultimum praefixit; tum quia salutem tot animarum sibi creditam impedivit et evertit.*

Second Point.—How a priest should guard against this temptation. The greatest saints are exposed to its attacks. Jesus Himself feared its effects upon His apostles. "I saw Satan like lightning falling down from heaven." Oh, how seldom it is that a man forgets himself so entirely as to seek the glory of God alone! Remember the wise counsel of St. Francis Xavier on this subject. A priest should watch over himself continually, often renew his good intentions, and so act as to enable him to say with St. Paul: *Non nos praedicamus, sed Jesum Christum.*

MEDITATION LXVII.

THE PREACHER A FISHER OF MEN.*

1.—*The Two Miraculous Draughts of Fishes are Representations of Preaching.*
2.—*Requisites for Certain Success in Preaching or in Spiritual Fishing.*
3.—*Conduct of a Good Priest after an Able Sermon or an Abundant Draught of Fishes.*

First Point.—Preaching is spiritual fishing. God had promised to send into the world a great number of fishermen, who would catch men in their nets. "Behold I will send many fishers, says the Lord, and they shall fish men." (Jer. xvi. 16.) This promise was and continues to be accomplished every day in the persons of those who preach the word of God. To every priest called to the apostolic life it is said: "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." According to St. Gregory Nazianzen, men are like fishes. *Homines natantes in mobilibus rebus, et amaris hujus vitae procellis.* Deprived of charity they devour each other like fishes, unless they happily fall into the net of God's word. The fisherman does not know what or how many fishes he will catch. Neither does the preacher know which of his hearers will profit by his zealous appeal.

Jesus Christ, desirous of exciting the faith and hope of His ministers, caused the two miraculous draughts of fish through the hands of His apostles. The one occurred at the time of their

* "From henceforth thou shalt catch men." (Luke, v. 10.)

vocation, the other after His Resurrection. The second one had many advantages over the first; in this the net was cast to the right side of the ship only, in the former it was cast now to the right, now to the left. "Cast the net on the right side of the ship." In the first draught the net *was breaking*, but not in the second, notwithstanding the number and the size of the fishes. In the one there is a mixture of good and bad fishes, in the other none but good fishes are caught in the net, and the number of them is told. (Joan. xxi. 11.) Those two draughts of fishes, says St. Augustine, are the figure of the Church in her two different conditions, namely, such as she now is, and such as she will be after the general resurrection. The former represents the Church militant, compared by the Saviour to a net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kinds of fishes. (Matt. xiii. 49.) Schisms and heresies tear her bosom. She contains just and sinners, elect and reprobate souls. In the second draught of fishes we should contemplate the Church triumphant, or the assembly of the predestined, who at the end of time shall be led to the shores of eternal beatitude.

The sacerdotal ministry is the net to gather in these two draughts of fishes. The office of the priest is to draw men out of the abyss of errors and vices, wherein they are plunged like fishes in water, to enable them to live for God in this world, and to share in His happiness in eternity. As Our Lord gathered together the fishes in that spot of the sea wherein the apostles were about to cast their nets, and put them, as it were, within their reach, so He leads the hearers to the foot of the sacred pulpit, and disposes them to profit by the divine word. How have I heretofore performed the function entrusted to me? Have I by my preaching instilled faith and divine grace into many souls, and thus prepared them for eternal glory?

Second Point.—Means to obtain success in preaching. Preaching should be intelligent and sincere, enlightened by a lively faith, strengthened by confidence, endowed with a spirit of conciliation and charity.

I. Why is it that so many preachers shall be obliged to acknowledge at the tribunal of God that they met with no success? Because, in place of working sincerely for God's glory, instead of drawing their inspiration from faith, they were governed by worldly intentions in the exercise of their functions. In seeking their own glory, they substituted man for God. "We labored the whole night and caught nothing." Jesus Christ was not there. "In that night they caught nothing." But when it was morning, when Jesus is before us, "Jesus stood on the shore,"

when we permit ourselves to be guided by His divine light, and not by the false glimmer of worldly prudence, these things assume a different aspect.

II. After the invitation of Jesus, Peter has no objection to comply, and consents to cast the net. "Master, we worked the whole night and caught nothing, but in Thy word I shall let down the net." St. Bonaventure explains that sentence as follows: Our labor was fruitless during the night, because we confided in our own skill; henceforth it shall not be so, for on Thee, O Lord, we put our dependence, and not on ourselves. Was he deceived in his expectation? "When they had done this they inclosed a great multitude of fishes." If we wish to touch the heart of God, and obtain His many gifts, we must place our reliance on Him. As much as He is an enemy of presumption, the daughter of pride, to the same extent does He love to see in us humility, the mother of confidence. Ah, how great is the power of the priest who, when he comes before the people, can tell them with the same assurance as Moses speaking to the children of Israel, "He who is has sent me to you." (Ex. iii. 14.) This confidence of hope is one of the most conspicuous gifts in the first preachers of the Gospel. "They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with confidence." (Acts, iv. 31.) This grace they had asked of the Lord, "Grant to Thy servants that with all confidence they may speak Thy word." (Ib. 29.) Their prayer was heard. "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit that spoke." (Acts, vi. 10.)

III. Concord and charity necessary to secure success. "They beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, that they should come and help them, and they came and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking." (Luke, v. 7.) A request made by the companions of Peter suffices to urge them to his aid. They show their joy at the good fortune of their companions. It is certainly a beautiful sight to see the ministers of the Lord considering their own interests as those of their Master, and looking upon the success of their brethren as if it were their own. O my God, Thou showest honor to good priests who forget themselves to gain souls, that will love and adore Thee. Infuse, O Lord, Thy charity into our hearts, and we will desire that all may be successful in their spiritual fishing.

Third Point.—Conduct of the apostolic fisherman when God has blessed his labors. He should admire the work of God, humble himself, and follow more and more closely the example of Jesus Christ.

Peter and his companions were struck with astonishment at

the sight of the miraculous draught. "He was wholly astonished, and all that were with him." The effects of preaching the word of God are still more admirable, and when a zealous priest has been the instrument of those wonders, when he sees men converted and transformed by the power of the divine word, he adores the power and the goodness of God, and to Him returns all the honor. The greater the success, the deeper his humility. The intimate knowledge he has of his own nothingness, together with the remembrance of his faults, makes him keenly feel his unworthiness to be chosen by God as the instrument for the accomplishment of great things. Peter falls down at the feet of Jesus, and cries out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Ib.) However, to thus manifest a holy fear of the Son of God was to really win His friendship, since He finds so many charms in humility. *Certe se humiliando non expellebat, sed attrahebat.* (St. Bonav.)

Let us also humble ourselves when we receive divine favors; let these be for us another bond of union with our generous Master, a motive of great zeal in his service. "And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things they followed Him." (Ib. v. 8.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Preaching is casting the net of the divine word to catch a spiritual draught of fishes. To every priest called to the apostolic ministry it is said: "From thenceforth thou shalt catch men." The two miraculous draughts of the apostles represent the Church in her two states, the militant and the triumphant How have I fulfilled this admirable ministry? Have I accomplished the conversion of souls by my manner of preaching the word of God?

Second Point.—Means of success in preaching. A lively faith, confidence, concord, and charity. The night is favorable to the catching o fishes, but the conversion of souls can be obtained in the daylight of faith only. "We have labored all the night and have taken nothing." Jesus was not there. "But when the morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore." If we wish to touch the heart of God, to obtain everything from His goodness, let us rely on His promises, and then set to work. "Give to Thy servants, that with all confidence they may speak Thy word." Concord among evangelical laborers contributes much to their success. Let us desire that all may prophesy as well, nay, better than we do.

Third Point.—Conduct of an apostolical fisherman when his labors have been successful. He ought to admire the work of

God, humble himself, and follow more and more closely the examples of Jesus Christ. "Peter and his companions were wholly astonished." The greater the success, the deeper Peter's humility. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Let the favors of heaven be for us what they were for the apostles, another motive to cling to so good a Master. "Leaving all things they followed Him."

MEDITATION LXVIII.

THE DUTY OF PREACHING REQUIRES THE STUDY AND LOVE OF HOLY SCRIPTURE.

1.—*The Church Teaches this Obligation.*
2.—*The very Nature of the Office Requires It.*

First Point.—The Church earnestly recommends the study of Scripture. The Church accomplishes the mission confided to her by means of preaching. "Go teach all nations." (Matt. xxviii. 19.) The knowledge which the Church commands priests to communicate to the people is the knowledge of God, of His mysteries and of His commandments, and it is found in the Bible.

The Church wishes her priests to draw from this source the wholesome waters of doctrine, which will give freshness and strength to the souls of men to enable them to bear fruit of true sanctity. For this purpose she commands her candidates for the priesthood to be thoroughly versed in the study of the Scriptures, and to be filled with their unction from the very beginning of their ecclesiastical education. One of the first orders that we received in the Church conferred on us the power of reading the sacred text in the presence of the faithful; and in the last of our ordinations, one of the graces she asked for us was: *Ut in lege Domini die ac nocte meditantes, quod legerint credant, quod crediderint doceant.*

The Council of Cologne says, speaking of priests and pastors: *Nunquam a manibus eorum liber legis, hoc est biblia deponatur.* The fourth Council of Milan desires that they should employ in the study of the Scriptures all the time not employed in the necessary labors of the ministry, that they let no day go by without reading some passages of them, and that they do so most diligently. *Quotidie ex sacris bibliis legit. Sacrarum litterarum studia diligenter colite.*

All the Fathers and interpreters use the same language. *Necesse est, ut qui ad officium praedicationis excubant, a sacrae lectionis*

studio non recedant. (St. Greg. Past.) *Vaca lectioni divinae in meditatione Scripturarum; habeto in divinis lectionibus frequentiam.* (St. Isid. Hips. de cont. saec.) *Divinas Scripturas saepius lege, imo nunquam de manibus tuis sacra lectio deponatur; disce quod doceas. Sint divinae Scripturae semper in manibus tuis et jugiter in mente volvantur. Tenenti codicem somnus obrepat, et cadentem faciem pagina sancta suscipiat.* (St. Hier.) *Semper sis, quoad potes, in exercitio Scripturarum . . . adhuc replico: Semper sis in exercitio Scripturarum.* (Pet. Bles. de Ep. c. 2.)

We know to what extent the holy Doctors loved and venerated the Scriptures. By dint of reading it, St. Bernard had so far appropriated it to himself, that in his writings, not the doctrine alone, but the expressions, the sentences, all breathe the Scriptures. Let us apply to ourselves what the angel of the Apocalypse said to St. John. "Take this book and devour it." The Lord said also to Ezechiel, "Eat this book and go, speak to the children of Israel." (Ezech. iii. 1.) Let us devour this holy book, digest it by meditation, that after being filled with its contents we may be able to give nourishment to the faithful. Have we adopted the views of the Church in this matter?

Second Point.—The study of the Scriptures is a necessary consequence of our obligations as preachers. What is our office as such? What are the ends of the ministry we exercise?

Being ambassadors from God to men, we must receive from God Himself the word we are commissioned to bring them. Being sent by heaven, we must speak the language of heaven. Where shall we find that word of God, that language of heaven, except in the Holy Scriptures? If it does not constitute the groundwork of our discourses, are we entitled to say with the prophets: "The mouth of the Lord has spoken—Thus says the Lord?" And with St. Paul: "Christ speaketh in me?"

The same Apostle discovers to us in all *Scripture divinely inspired,* four properties corresponding to the four ends of our preaching. They are useful to *teach* the truths of faith, *to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice,* to refute errors contrary to those truths: *to reprove,* to labor to correct a loose morality; *to correct,* to guide souls in the ways of justice, *to instruct in justice.* A knowledge of the Scriptures can alone enable us to fulfil all those obligations of our apostolic ministry.

It continually devolves upon us to lay down austere truths or to censure vices. Hence there is always a secret conflict between priests and hearers. Human arguments will not suffice to overcome so many oppositions. Authority is needed to convince and govern men. No man has a right of himself to impose his opinion

on another man. God alone is master of minds and hearts. The power of His word, such as we find it in our sacred books, makes its influence felt on those very persons who are most destitute of religious feeling. Let us depend on its efficacy, not on ourselves.

Bossuet represents to us Jesus Christ as a divine conqueror who, through the ministry of the priests, desires to reign over hearts. However, those hearts are strongly armed against His mission, and it is our duty to brave everything to subjugate those hearts to the will of our Sovereign. The stronghold of bad habits must be scaled and demolished, the deep devices and cunning of malice must be thwarted, and all the fortifications raised up by haughty and inveterate pride against the knowledge of God, must be levelled in the dust. What force can a vain preacher bring against such obstacles? These intrenchments can not be overcome by a fusillade of flowers. They will not fall before a volley of well-rounded and high-sounding periods. To conquer such obstacles, weightier and more efficient weapons are required. The word of God, replete with life, strength, and effectiveness, must be launched against them. If we wish to give power and effect to our sermons, we must be filled with the spirit of heavenly doctrine, be nourished and filled with the very essence of Christianity.

Speaking on this subject St. Augustine says: *Sapienter quis dicit tanto magis vel minus, quanto in Scripturis sanctis magis minusve profecit.* It is by studying the Scriptures that we shall learn to speak that beautiful language of piety, of zeal, of unction, which gives to style an imagery now touching, now majestic or terrible. In the Scripture we shall find incidents and comparisons which will vividly interest the hearers; there we shall find, as in its source, that power of apostolic eloquence which penetrates souls with compunction, snatches them from the tyranny of passions, enables them to advance with rapid strides in the way of virtue.

O pastor of souls, whatever may be the state of health or sickness of your flock, lead it to the rich field of the Scriptures; it will there find the food which is the best suited to its needs. "And he will find pastures." (Joan. xvi. 9.) But. St. Bernard asks: *Quomodo in pascua divinorum eloquiorum educet greges dominicos pastor idiota?* (Ser. lxxvi. in can.) Take the resolution to apply yourself more seriously to the study of the Holy Scriptures; and as a preparation for Mass, recall to mind that the word of God and the Eucharist are necessary for the life of your soul and the exercise of your ministry. The Bible and the altar are two tables set up by the Saviour in the Church; they are two feasts of which the good priest is always eager to partake. In the one

he eats the bread of angels, the adorable body of Jesus; in the other truth is his nourishment. The first imparts to him that vigor which his sacerdotal functions require; the second, by enlightening his mind, enables him to penetrate beyond the veil where dwells the Holy of holies. O my God, grant that I may relish the sweetness of the Eucharistic manna, and imbibe the spirit of the Holy Scriptures. Kindle in me so great a desire to meditate on Thy law, that it may henceforth be my most agreeable occupation, and my pure delight. *Sint castae deliciae meae scripturae tuae; nec fallar in eis, nec fallam ex eis.* (St. Aug. Con. l. xi. c. 2.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The Church wishes us to study the Holy Scriptures. To read the sacred text in the presence of the faithful is one of the first powers granted by the Church to her ministers. She asks that the priest love the sacred writings. *Ut in lege Domini die ac nocte meditantes, quod legerint credant, quod crediderint doceant.* The fourth Council of Milan, that of Cologne and many others, earnestly recommend this study, as do the Fathers of the Church and the sacred writers.

Second Point.—Our obligations as preachers demand the same. Being ambassadors of God to men, we should receive the word of God from God Himself, and communicate it to them in His name. Where is His word, if not in the Scriptures? It has four properties which respond to the four ends of preaching God's word, *to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice.* We shall excel more or less in our sermons, says St. Augustine, according to our greater or lesser knowledge of the Scriptures.

MEDITATION LXIX.

ADMINISTRATION OF THE SACRAMENTS.*

1.—*We should Highly Esteem this Function.*
2.—*What should we do to Accomplish it Well.*

First Point.—Excellence and dignity of this function. Let us recall to mind what the Sacraments are. *Nihil sanctius, nihil utilius, nihilque excellentius aut magis divinum.* Their origin is heavenly, their institution is divine, their effects are miracles of

* "Let a man so account of us as of the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God. Here now it is required amongst the dispensers that a man be found faithful." (1 Cor. vi. 1, 2.)

grace, gifts for eternity. They close the gates of hell, and open those of heaven; they bring back the dead to life, restore the friendship of God to those who had lost it; they increase or restore godliness, which gives us a right to the kingdom of heaven. *Per quae omnis vera justitia vel incipit, vel caepta augetur, vel amissa reparatur.* (Com. Trid. sess. 7, in proem.) They cost Jesus Christ all His blood; of this blood they contain and apply the infinite merits which flow themselves, as St. Augustine says, out of His opened side, or rather out of His heart. *De Christi latere manantia.* (De. Civ. Dei. i. 15.) The same holy Doctor does not dare to decide whether the action which justifies men through the Sacraments is not something as great, or perhaps greater, than the creation of the world. *Judicet qui potest utrum majus sit justos creare, quam impios justificare.* (Tr. 72, in Jo.) Be that as it may be, he adds, if in either case the same power is required, it is certain that the sinner's justification requires more mercy. *Certe si aequalis utrumque potentiae, hoc majoris est misericordiae.* (Ibid.) What an honor God has conferred on you, O priests of the New Law, by making you the dispensers of His mysteries. If a prince had put in the hands of one of his officers the key of all his treasures, if he had given him power to open and to close prisons, with the greater power of life and death over all his subjects throughout his empire, what would men think of such a favor? That favor, however, would be nothing compared to that which you have received. He, the immortal King of ages, has placed in your hands the treasures of His grace, the keys of His kingdom, and you make use of those immense powers whenever you administer the Sacraments. Ah, during those precious moments how well you deserve to attract to you the attention of heaven and of earth! "We have been made spectacle to the world, to the angels and to men." Do you not give great glory to God, great joy to the angels, and gain immense advantages for men and for yourselves when you perform, in a holy manner, the great functions intrusted to you?

Reflect, on the other hand, what evil and scandal would follow if, through want of faith, and from the habit of acting without reflection, you dishonored this sublime function and brought it to the level of worldly materialism. Let us ponder over the words of St. Paul: "Here now it is required amongst the dispensers that a man be found faithful." It is principally at the Last Day, in presence of the sovereign Judge, that the priest will be seriously examined concerning his fidelity in the exercise of this important function. Are we ready at this moment to undergo this examination?

Second Point.—What does this divine dispensation require of us? The pastor ought to be perfectly well acquainted with the

doctrine concerning the Sacraments, their nature, their effects, the dispositions which they require, the meaning of the ceremonies which accompany them, and in all these things he ought to carefully instruct his people. But apart from this, it may be said that the administration of the Sacraments demands of us three-fold fidelity to God, to the Church, to the faithful. "That a man may be found faithful."

We should respect God in His gifts, show our appreciation of His confidence in us, by our zeal to further His glory. It is, therefore, of strict obligation to keep up the veneration due to the Sacraments, not to neglect anything, to preserve them from profanation. But what of the priest who would profane them himself, who would handle mysteries so holy with impure hands? *Quantum scelus sacra mysteria polluto ore conficere, vel in foedas manus sumere, contrectare, atque aliis porrigere et ministrare.* (Cat. Conc. of Trid.) Theologians declare that he who, in the discharge of the duties of his office, administers the Sacraments in a state of mortal sin, commits as many new mortal sins as the aggregate of Sacraments which he confers. A good priest purifies his soul from the slightest stain by an act of sorrow before administering the Sacraments, and he at the same time addresses to God some fervent prayer, that he may deserve to be a fit instrument of His grace.

The Church and the faithful demand of us a punctual observance of all that is prescribed, not merely to procure the validity of the Sacraments, but also everything that is prescribed to excite the faith, the piety, and the religion of the faithful. The fifth Council of Milan directs priests as follows: *Ut sanctissima sacramenta, non solum pure, sancte, religioseque ipsi tractent; verum etiam ritus ac caeremonias teneant atque adhibeant, quae in illis administrandis sanctae Ecclesiae instituto atque usu comprobatae sunt.* The ceremonies of the Church are well fitted to touch the hearts of men, to raise their minds to heavenly things. But will they be in any way useful if they are performed with precipitation, without modesty or gravity? It is said in the life of St. Charles that nothing could be more edifying than to see him administer the Sacraments. Full of recollections he meditated a short time before beginning the ceremonies, and during the exercise of his ministry his eyes, his hands, his motions, the attitude of his body, were in perfect harmony with the great things which he was performing. So delighted were the people in the church in seeing him at the altar, that many would fain have spent whole days within its precincts. They seemed to feel the charm of the piety of the saintly cardinal. *Vide, igitur, O sacerdos ministerium tuum, ne illud dedecore afficias; vide,*

ne similis fias aquae baptismali, ut sapienter monet D. Gregorius, quae peccata baptizatorum diluens, illos ad caeleste regnum mittit, et ipsa postea in cloacam descendit. (Abelly. Sac. Chr. c. 8.)

Examine what your conduct has been regarding the administration of the Sacraments. Have you considered it as one of the principal functions of your state? You are liable to be called on any time to administer the Sacraments: have you been always careful to preserve your soul in the purity of conscience which it requires? Did you not administer them without any preparation whatsoever? Did you in the sacred functions observe religiously all the rules of the Church? Do you really give edification to the beholders? Humbly acknowledge that you have committed a great number of faults, and endeavor henceforth so to act as to be numbered among the faithful dispensers of the mysteries of God.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Excellence and dignity of this function. Let us recall to mind what the Sacraments are. *Nil sanctius, nihil utilius, nihil excellentius aut magis divinum.* Their origin is heavenly, their institution is divine, their effects are miracles of grace. St. Augustine dares not to decide whether the action, which justifies men through the Sacraments, is not as great or even greater than the work of creation. O Priest of God, how great the honor which God imparted to you by making you the dispenser of His mysteries!

Second Point.—What does this divine duty demand of us? A three-fold fidelity. Toward God.—We should respect Him in His gifts. We should maintain the respect due to them. We should administer them with proper dispositions. *Qui sancti non sunt, sancta tractare non debent.* We should duly prepare the faithful for their reception. Toward the Church and the faithful.—Leave nothing undone, not merely to secure their validity, but also to excite the faith, the piety, the religion of the faithful. A Council gives to priests the following directions: *Ut sanctissima sacramenta . . . non solum pure, sancte, religioseque ipsi tractent; verum etiam ritus ac caeremonias teneant atque adhibeant.* There was nothing more edifying than to see St. Charles performing those heavenly functions.

MEDITATION LXX.

THE HEARING OF CONFESSIONS. THIS MINISTRY AFFORDS PLEASURE AND REPUGNANCE.

1.—*Zeal of a Fervent Priest in Hearing Confessions.*
2.—*Neglect of the Lukewarm Priest in this Matter.*

First Point—All the motives of zeal concur in encouraging a good priest to love the ministry of confession, love of God and of the Church, love of souls, intelligent love of himself.

I. Consider the action of a priest when he uses properly the power granted to him of absolving sins. He carries out the grand designs of the Lord for the salvation of the human soul, which is the noblest of all his works. He demolishes the unnatural wall which separated God from the objects of His affections and destroyed the happy union which united them in the bonds of love and peace. He banishes sin which wounded God in His infinite perfections, and protects Him from many outrages by uprooting and destroying the cause of sin. He accomplishes the desires of Jesus Christ, who through the priest's ministry derives the most pleasing result of His sufferings and His death. He induces the Holy Ghost to return to the temples wherein He loved to dwell.

You prepare for the angels and the saints companions in their eternal felicity. Consider how much glory he procures for God, how much joy for those who love Him. "I say to you, that even so, there shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just, who need not penance." (Luke, xv. 7.) Think of what consolation he affords the Church. She weeps over the spiritual death of her children, and the priest restores them to her, full of life and health.

II. This function gives the priest also a particular right to be called the saviour of his brethren, since it is by its exercise that he more directly and closely co-operates in their salvation. When he attends to other duties of his ministry, such as preaching, catechising, he prepares souls to receive the life of grace, but in hearing confessions he communicates to them that sacred life. "The preacher gives souls to God," said Father Eudes, "but the confessor saves them. The preacher points out to men the commands of the Lord, the confessor enforces their accomplishment; the former prescribes safe remedies for the cure of

spiritual maladies, the second applies them to the sick and cures them." It follows that, generally speaking, the happiest success of the preacher consists in preparing the success of the confessor. St. Liguori was wont to say, "The preacher sows, the confessor gathers," and he used to add, "the priest who loves not the confessional, does not love souls."

III. The priest, however, would be zealous in hearing confessions were he merely to think of his own sanctification. In the confessional especially the priest can develop the most excellent qualities of mercy; he can therefore be certain of obtaining mercy. (Matt. v. 7.) God will certainly open the treasure of His graces and lavish them upon those priests whom He sees engaged in the work most dear to His heart—when for the love of Him we sacrifice not only our rest and our inclinations, but often our health itself. He certainly will hear the grateful prayers offered in our behalf by the afflicted souls whom we have comforted, the sinners whose chains we have broken, and who now, since we relieved their souls of the cruel pangs of remorse, experience so much happiness.

This ministry, moreover, affords at every moment the occasion and motive of practising the most excellent of virtues. Count the acts of patience, of abnegation, of humility, which in one or two hours spent in the confessional will go to increase the treasure of the priest's merits in heaven. His obligation to accommodate himself to the spiritual needs of all penitents, of exciting to penance hardened sinners, of keeping and guiding on the way to a perfect life some pious, devoted souls. The lessons of vigilance, of fear of God, of charity afforded him by some of the same penitents, the wonderful operations of grace, the miracles of mercy of which he is a witness and often even the instrument—all these facts are so many powerful motives to stimulate progress in his own sanctification. It follows that in this hidden ministry of the confessional the fervent priest finds every motive which leads him to esteem this holy function.

Second Point.—Repugnance to this duty is nearly always due to tepidity. One would seem to be wholly taken up with the care of his salvation, but he in truth looks much more to his comfort than to his sanctification. And he is much less afraid of the dangers attached to the practice of hearing confessions, than of the trouble it entails.

Yet it cannot be denied that there are dangers, and that these dangers are more serious than they appear to certain imprudent priests, who go carelessly and hurriedly to the confessional without any preparation or precaution. Our Lord fully foresaw these

emergencies. He did not neglect to provide safeguards. He does not send His soldiers to fight for His interests unassisted or unarmed. Priests must place their trust in the wisdom, power, and friendship of their heavenly King. The temptations arising from hearing confessions, like all others, will redound to our spiritual benefit if we are loyal to our trust. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it." (1 Cor. x. 13.) We ought to know from our theology that there are graces attached to every state in life. Can it be possible that our state is destitute of those graces, when we consider that it is the most necessary for the welfare of the world? Wherever there is danger there is always a means of overcoming it when we are called upon to encounter it for the love of God and His glory.

A strange illusion indeed! A priest pretends to fear the loss of his soul in the discharge of a duty which calls into action the most praiseworthy charity, yet he fails to discover any danger in an idle and almost useless life, in a thoughtlessness, not to say indifference, regarding the eternal loss of souls redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. The real cause of so much reluctance to hear confessions is nothing else than a lack of determination to conquer one's self. A priest must study to overcome an indolent disposition, must sacrifice his own feelings for the benefit of souls. As self-abnegation is the distinctive characteristic of true sanctity, so also is assiduity in the confessional the touchstone of zeal in the priest and pastor.

O my God, give an increase of zeal to Thy ministers, by increasing their faith. Enable them to understand the infinite value of the talent Thou hast intrusted to them, when Thou didst say, "Receive the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." Give them a full knowledge of the great responsibility they take upon themselves when they allow to remain inactive a power on which depends Thy glory, the consolation of the Church, and the salvation of souls. Fill them with a holy compassion toward so many unfortunate sinners who wander along the brink of perdition, and whom they might rescue through a little patience and charity in the confessional. Convince them of Thy paternal solicitude and affection toward the priest who through love of Thee devotes himself to a ministry so painful to nature. Give them a glimpse of the rich, immortal crown which thou reservest for him in Thy blessed eternity. In your preparation for Mass, and also in your thanksgiving, offer to Jesus Christ sacrifice for sacrifice. He immolates Himself for

you; sacrifice yourself for Him by accepting for His glory all the troubles of mind and body annexed to the ministry of reconciliation.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—All the motives of zeal unite in encouraging the good priest to love the ministry of confession. I. The love of God and of the Church. In the confessional I help the Lord to repair the noblest of His works. I destroy sin, which is the great enemy of His glory. I realize the desires of Jesus Christ, by making His death useful. I enable the Holy Ghost to return into sanctuaries in which He loved to dwell. What consolation for the Church! She wept over the death of her children, and I restore them to her full of life. II. The love of souls. In no other function do I labor so immediately for the salvation of my brethren. The most happy success of the preacher is that of preparing success for the confessor. III. The love of my own sanctification. In the confessional, more than anywhere else, I exercise mercy, and I am certain, therefore, to obtain mercy. In the confessional I find both the occasion and the motive of practising the most excellent virtues.

Second Point.—Tepidity is generally the cause for the neglect of this laborious ministry. Undoubtedly the function has its incidental dangers. But Our Lord foresaw them, and gives us efficacious means to overcome them. Let us trust in His wisdom, power, and love. There are graces for every condition of life; such graces are certainly attached to the ministry of the confessor. The real cause of so much repugnance to hear confessions is want of determination to overcome ourselves.

MEDITATION LXXI.

GOODNESS OF A FATHER THE FIRST QUALITY OF THE CONFESSOR.

1.—*The Confessor Anticipates the Action of the Penitents.*

2.—*He Encourages Them.*

3.—*He is Patient with Them.*

First Point.—**He anticipates the action of the penitent.** He is in every place the representative of Him who wishes to be considered the Friend of sinners, but in the confessional he is in the most eminent manner the minister of His mercy, or, according to St. Ambrose, *the vicar of His love.* In the confessional the priest

brings souls to the life of grace. If he be faithful to the spirit of his vocation, he has within him the heart of a father with all its natural tenderness; he truly deserves the name *father* which is given him by penitents.

He goes to meet sinners, invites them to return, smoothes the way, removes all difficulties. Nor does he consider it sufficient to remain sitting at the gate of the fold, in order to open it to the strayed sheep as soon as it returns. The good shepherd anticipates the erring one, seeks it diligently, takes no rest until he has found it. "He goes to that which was lost until he finds it." The father of the prodigal perceived his beloved son afar off, and notwithstanding his errors, his bowels are moved with compassion; such is the heart of a father. Another would have said perhaps: If the youth is unfortunate, he deserves it well. Is it sorrow for his offence, or necessity which brings him? Such thoughts are unknown to a father. However guilty the son, he forgets his faults at the sight of his distress. He does not wait till the son comes to him: he goes in haste to meet him.

Blessed is the priest who through zeal and meekness draws sinners to the confessional. Blessed is the flock intrusted to his care. The frequentation or neglect of the Sacraments being the almost infallible mark of the good or bad state of a congregation, it is easy to foresee what kind of a congregation his will be. Whoever teaches respect for confession makes the practice of it easy, uses one of the best means to save souls. Every one desired to go to confession to St. Francis de Sales; nay, after his elevation to the episcopate he used to spend whole days and part of the nights in hearing penitents who came to him from every quarter. O Priests of God, many sinners who conceal their remorse under the appearance of a false peace, would come to you to obtain real peace, if they knew that they could find in you the goodness and affection of a father! If you can not attract them, be ready at least to receive them with kindness as soon as they present themselves. If you are requested to go to the confessional, go immediately; you know not the secrets of God. Do not permit the moment of grace to pass; it may never return.

Second Point.—A good confessor encourages the penitent. To make a good confession is especially painful for those who rarely go to confession. Let us not add any weight to the burden of the penitent. Rather relieve him by giving him credit for the struggles he must have endured and conquered before bringing himself to a condition so painful to nature, so humiliating to pride.

How contrary to the spirit of the Church are those priests, who, in the confessional, are austere even to coldness, who are unsym-

pathetic, who, instead of showing some consideration for the weakness of sinners, discourage them. For God's sake let us not extinguish that precious spark of the sacred fire which grace has kindled in the heart of a penitent. It is our office to foster the development of a growing contrition. This is the favorable moment for the soul, this is the acceptable time of salvation, if we know how to use it properly. Kindness, an affectionate welcome to a penitent, nearly always make a decided impression. Encouraged and pleased to see how very easy matters are made for him, he begins to feel a holy confidence, to feel strongly drawn toward God, whose goodness he admires in that of His ministers.

How many people guilty of concealment of sins and of sacrilege would have continued in their fatal course until death had they not, entering the confessional, been suddenly changed by a kind word of encouragement on the lips of a prudent, pious confessor! Begin your ministry of peace in this manner. Congratulate him on his determination to set the affairs of his conscience in order. Life is short, the hour of death uncertain. Show him that there is nothing so honorable as to labor to destroy sin; this is the work for which God came down on earth. Speak to him of the joy which is experienced when one has recovered the friendship of the Lord; remind him how easy it is to make a good confession; that he need not borrow any trouble; that you will help him to remember his faults; that they shall be pardoned. God in His kindness waited for him, inspired him with the thought and the desire to return to Him. As He treated him so mercifully when he had forgotten and offended Him, He will certainly now be merciful to him when He sees him determined to serve Him. Paternal words of this kind will fill the sinner's heart with confidence, and encourage him to confess with sincerity.

Third Point.—The goodness of the confessor should be patient and constant. The confessional is the proper place to practice the words of St. Paul: "Charity is patient." If the labor of the confessional consisted merely in hearing the avowal of sins, in sounding dispositions, in pronouncing sentence, this ministry would neither offer grave difficulties nor promise great merits. But often everything is to be done by the confessor; those avowals are to be obtained, sometimes, as it were, wrung from the penitent; proper dispositions are to be infused and fostered. Many indeed are the discomforts that one must make up his mind to experience.

Those whom Providence sends to our tribunal may not be penitents ready to be absolved, but ignorant Christians to be instructed, prejudiced persons to be undeceived, sinners to be converted. There may be at times timid, troubled souls. You have

need of much forbearance to put up with so many spiritual infirmities, to bear them patiently. You have need of much self-control to keep your temper and maintain calmness, when, as it often happens, you discover depths of degradation in a penitent who has, apparently, very little sorrow for the crimes he confesses. An interruption, a rebuke, even an expression of astonishment, may have most unhappy consequences.

Assiduity in the confessional means continual self-sacrifice; according to St. Francis de Sales it may be compared to a martyrdom. That heroic patience can spring from but one source, which is charity. If you will exercise aright the ministry of the confessional, you must necessarily love God, love the souls of men, love them as a father, and ardently desire their eternal happiness. Reflect upon yourself.—Act of contrition.—Resolution.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The good confessor anticipates the action of the penitent. Is it enough to remain sitting at the gate of the fold, in order to open it to the stray sheep when it chooses to return? The good shepherd does not think so. He at once sets out and seeks it diligently. The father of the prodigal goes to meet his son. A powerful means to save souls is to cause man to love and respect confession and to attract sinners by gentleness. When you are desired to hear confessions, go immediately, fear lest you allow the moment of grace to escape.

Second Point.—The good confessor encourages the penitent. He does so at the beginning, which is generally most distressing to the penitent. Affability, a kind welcome, often make the desired impression. Paternal language opens his heart to confidence and his lips to sincere avowal. To the extent in which kindness produces happy effects, does severity or even coldness have unhappy consequences.

Third Point.—The good confessor should always be patient. He has to suffer many irritations, to contend with many temptations. His duty is more than to hear avowals, to sound dispositions; he has to sometimes wring the avowal of sins from the penitent; he has to instil the proper dispositions into the heart of the penitent. He certainly needs much patience to bear so many spiritual infirmities, and to bear them continually during his priestly career.

MEDITATION LXXII.

THE CONFESSOR SHOULD BE A JUST JUDGE.

1.—*He Judges in the Name of God.*
2.—*His Justice should be Impartial.*
3.—*It should be Enlightened by Knowledge.*

First Point.—The confessor judges in the name of God Himself. This is a sublime but true idea of the ministry of the priest as confessor. St. Cyprian calls it *anticipatum Christi judicium.* Jesus Christ in the person of His minister pronounces now in anticipation a sentence which God will ratify when the soul appears before Him after death. It amounts to saying that for the guilty man there are two judgments to undergo, the one in time, where all is mercy; the other after death, where everything shall be weighed in the scale of strict justice. But the sinner can escape the terror of God's judgment, by appealing with confidence to the tribunal of clemency. St. Jerome, speaking of the priest, says *Judicant ante judicium.* St. Bernard desires to be presented to God at the last day, *judicatus, non judicandus.* Whatever has been forgiven by the confessor in his tribunal will not be submitted to judgment after life by the Almighty. He will not reopen a case already judged. *Non judicabit Dominus bis in idipsum.* (Serm. in Circum. Dom.) St. John Chrysostom goes so far as to say, *Formam judicandi a terra sumit coelum.* St. Hilary, considering this power which was not given to angels, not even to the Queen of angels, exclaims: *O beatus coeli janitor . . . cujus terrestre judicium praejudicata sit auctoritas in coelo, ut quae in terris aut ligita sint, aut soluta, statuti ejusdem conditionem obtinent in coelo.* It follows that the authority of the judgment pronounced on earth is acknowledged in heaven. The same sentence is pronounced by the two tribunals. Such is the honor, such also is the responsibility attached to the office of the confessor. *Videte quid faciatis; non enim hominis exercetis judicium, sed Domini, et quodcumque judicaveritis, in vos redundabit.* (2 Par. xix. 6.)

Let the priest say to himself before beginning to hear confessions. I am about to pronounce sentences of life or death, not for time only, but for eternity. I am about to anticipate the judgment of Jesus Christ, *Anticipatum Christi judicium.* I must now cease to be a man merely; God alone can forgive sins. Jesus should now live within me, in order to speak and purify con-

sciences through me. And since I am His representative, how faithful I must be to judge according to the law and the rules laid down for me by God and His Church.

Second Point.—The confessor should judge impartially. With God there is no exception of persons. There should be none with His minister. "There is no iniquity with the Lord our God, nor respect of persons." (2 Par. xix. 7.) In each penitent a good priest sees a soul to be saved—the soul of the poor is of as much value as the soul of the rich. Equality is the law of the Gospel; human considerations, distinctions of rank and of fortune should hold no place. If any preference is given it should be in favor of the humble mother, the domestic, the laborer, who can but occasionally find time to attend to their devotions; for the poor, the sick, and others who have most need of our ministrations.

"Persons of rank," said St. Francis Regis, "will not be in want of confessors; my lot must be to attend to the poor, the infirm, to that part of the flock of Jesus Christ which is the most forsaken." Let us also be on our guard against a species of temptation which would induce us to give much time to the direction of a few souls, and cut short the direction of others. Let the maxim of St. Paul be our rule: "To the wise and the unwise I am a debtor." (Rom. i. 14.)

Third Point.—The confessor as judge should possess learning. The Church has in all ages closed the gates of her sanctuary against the ignorant minister. How deplorable would be the consequences of ignorance in the confessional. If a blind man attempted to lead another blind man, what would happen to both? Insufficient knowledge of moral theology is, according to Benedict XIV., one of the greatest calamities of the Church. *Inter majores Ecclesiae calamitates eam esse, quod confessarii morali theologia parum imbuti essent, et ea quae contra Dei legem a fidelibus perpetrantur parum dignoscerent.* (Just. 32.) St. Liguori should cause more than one priest to tremble when he says: *Affirmo in statu damnationis esse eum confessarium, qui sine sufficienti scientia ad confessiones suscipiendas se exponit.* (Prax. Confes.) And from this principle, which can not be questioned, he infers that every confessor must apply himself to study. *Nullus confessarius intermittere debet theologiae moralis studium*, in order not merely to acquire knowledge, but also to remember what they have learned. *Quia ex tot diversis et disparsibus quae ad hanc scientiam pertinent, multa, quamvis lecta, temporis progressu decidunt a mente.*

If I am to judge the consciences of others, it does not suffice that I should simply know the extent of my powers—*scientia potestatis.* I must also possess the science of the law—*scientia*

juris, I must have a precise knowledge of what is commanded or forbidden by the law; for infractions against that law are to be referred to my tribunal. I should be able to distinguish between grievous violations and slight transgressions, I should not confound mortal with venial sins, the counsel with the precept. What an evil it would be were I to mislead consciences in the very function instituted to direct them. A confessor should always be ready to clear up doubts, to answer difficult questions; he has, therefore, need of sound learning; as a consequence, he ought to cultivate the study of theology all his life, for the knowledge which is not kept up by study will soon become obscured, and finally be lost. Such a priest would soon become actually incapable of hearing confessions; in his case routine would take the place of the law.

Renew the resolution of devoting some time each day to the study of theology, and be faithful to it. Even with this precaution you will have to deplore mistakes; for these happen to the most learned confessors: but you will have a claim upon the indulgence of God, and be enabled to say to Him with confidence, "remember not my sins of ignorance." Draw near to Christ, as the source of divine light, the principle of all virtue, of all knowledge; and as a preparation for Mass consider the admirable words of St. Bernard: *Origo fontium et fluminum mare est, virtutum et scientiarum Dominus Jesus Christus. . . Quidquid sapientiae, quidquid te virtutis habere confidis, Dei virtuti ac Dei sapientiae deputa Christo.* (Serm. xiii. in Cant.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The confessor is a judge, and represents Jesus Christ. A sublime idea of the ministry of the confessor! St. Cyprian names it, *Anticipatum Christi judicium.* St. Jerome says of confessors, *Judicant ante judicium.* That which has been decreed in the confessional will be decreed also at the tribunal of God—it is one and the same sentence. What a glory for the priest! What a responsibility also! Strict obligation to be just, to judge according to prescribed rules.

Second Point.—He should be impartial in his judgments. With God there is no regard to persons; there should not be any with His ministers. In each of his penitents the good confessor sees only a soul to be saved; to his eyes the soul of the poor man is of as much value as the soul of the rich man. Preferences, if any, are for the poor, the sick, and such others as are most in need of our ministrations.

Third Point.—The confessor ought to be a man of learning. If a blind man lead a blind man, what will befall them? Insuffi-

cient knowledge of moral theology among confessors is, according to St. Benedict XIV., one of the greatest calamities of the Church. St. Liguori declares, in precise terms, that a confessor may not under any pretext discontinue the study of moral theology. *Nullus confessarius intermittere debet theologiae moralis studium.*

MEDITATION LXXIII.

PRUDENCE AND PIETY INDISPENSABLE TO THE CONFESSOR.

1.—*Prudence.*
2.—*Piety.*

First Point.—Prudence necessary to the confessor. The sacred tribunal is surrounded with snares, the more to be feared from the fact that they are not known. The minister of reconciliation is not only father and judge; he is physician also. He must study the nature and gravity of sins, select the remedies and apply them, and these three duties require very great prudence.

The first danger for the confessor lies in diagnosing the spiritual maladies of his penitents. But there is another to be guarded against. In desiring to probe the depth of wounds and sores, both the sick man and his physician may be exposed to serious ill. When there is question of penetrating the abysses of the human heart, much dexterity and caution are needed. It would certainly be a misfortune if, through imprudent or unnecessary questions, through curiosity or morbid interrogations out of keeping with the sanctity of the Sacrament and the dignity of the priest, any obstacle was put in the way of a sinner's conversion. These are often as quick to take scandal as they were unconcerned in giving it. It would be a sad triumph for the enemies of the priesthood. The following is the strict rule: In questions regarding the sixth commandment, rather fail to procure the integrity of confession, than fail in prudence. Have I been careful to form my conscience and that of the penitent according to this rule? If I have reason to think that through the grace of God, and to my own efforts under God, this person is disposed to make a good confession, I must rest satisfied. By seeking to know approximately the nature, the number of sins, and the circumstances which change the kind of the sin, I shall have done my duty.

After having examined the spiritual disease as far as discretion permits, the prudent confessor combines firmness and sympathy in his treatment of it. Like the Good Samaritan of the Gospel, he mixes together the oil and the wine, and thus makes up a balm which cures the wound. *Ut more periti medici, similiter infundat vinum et oleum vulneribus sauciati.* (Con. Lat. iv.) He considers when and to whom he ought to give or refuse absolution, for there are some who are incapable of deriving any benefit from this admirable Sacrament. When the confessor meets a soul loaded with crimes, he must be careful not to tell the penitent that he can not absolve him. This class of people are precisely those who have the greatest need of our ministry. Yet, as excessive severity would discourage them, so would too great readiness to grant absolution cause them to slumber in their sins.

When the confessor has resolved on the treatment in a given case he should endeavor to induce the penitent to accept it. The penitent's willingness amounts oftentimes to a sincere conversion, and in this we see the distinctive work of prudence and piety combined.

Second Point.—Piety necessary in the confessor. The first Council of Milan, when speaking of the confessor, mentions this quality before all the others. Piety is a tender love for God, a compassionate love for our fellow beings; piety is ardent zeal for the glory of God who sent us, for the conversion of souls; piety is faith, is unction of the Holy Spirit, profitable for this world and for the next. Piety is necessary to the confessor. How could he break the spell of passions, how could he impress cold, hardened hearts without piety? He has need of the light and grace of the Holy Spirit, who communicates His gifts to pious priests, united to Him by prayer, purity of intention, and a constant desire of pleasing Him. Piety inspires confidence, encourages the timid, awakens remorse, suggests those devout sentiments which touch the heart because they come from the heart. Piety lightens the labors attached to this important ministry. It makes the confessor merciful, gives him that kindness, that charity to which the most obstinate sinner is compelled to yield. How out of place is the lukewarm priest in the confessional! A good priest can convert the souls of his penitents and lead them to heaven. A lukewarm priest can do neither. Consider, then, his fearful responsibility!

Let us meditate on the words of Leo XII. in his encyclical for the Jubilee of 1826: *Sistunt se quidem multi sacramenti poenitentiae ministris prorsus imparati, sed persaepe tamen hujusmodi*

ut ex imparatis parati fieri possint, si modo sacerdos, viscera indutus misericordiae Christi Jesu, qui non venit vocare justos sed peccatores, sciat studiose, patienter et mansuete cum ipsis agere. We have a great number of sinners coming to our tribunal unprepared to receive the grace of the sacrament. They can, nevertheless, be reconciled with God, provided that their confessor, instigated by feelings of mercy, knows how to use the zeal, patience, and benignity bestowed upon him by the Holy Spirit. (Col. iii. 12.) If, in the practice of my duty, I do not treat my penitents, *Studiose patienter et mansuete*, I am no more prepared to administer the Sacraments than they are to receive them with profit to their souls. *Quod si praestare praetermittat, profecto non magis ipse dicendus est paratus ad audiendum, quam caeteri adconfitendum accedere.* Many are the confessors who find their condemnation in that oracle of the vicar of Jesus Christ. Am I one of them? I quiet my conscience by saying that it is out of my power to absolve the ill-disposed. I fail to recollect that the Lord depends upon my charity, my prudence, my piety, in order to make of them true penitents.

Examine your conscience before you ascend the altar; beg pardon of Jesus Christ that, in the reconciliation of sinners, you have corresponded so poorly with His mercy.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Prudence necessary to the confessor. In his office of physician the confessor should study the nature of the disease, select the proper remedies, and administer them. Great prudence is necessary. The proper rule in questions regarding the sixth commandment, is rather to fail to procure the integrity of confession than to be deficient in prudence. In the choice of remedies, the good confessor combines firmness with prudence. He sustains a happy medium between excessive severity, which discourages sinners, and too great indulgence, which causes them to slumber in their sins.

Second Point.—Piety in the confessor. Piety is a tender love for God; a compassionate love for your fellow beings, unction poured into the heart by the Spirit of God. How necessary it is to the confessor! Piety wins the confidence of sinners, encourages the timid. It inspires sentiments of ardent devotion which penetrate the hearts of others, because they come from the heart. What can the cold or the lukewarm priest do in the confessional? Let us carefully meditate on the words of Leo XII., and see that we find not our condemnation in them.

MEDITATION LXXIV.

PRACTICE OF THE MINISTRY OF CONFESSION. WHAT DOES A GOOD PRIEST DO?

1.—*Before Entering the Confessional.*
2.—*While in the Confessional.*
3.—*After Leaving the Confessional.*

First Point.—A good priest, before entering the confessional, however exalted his idea of this function of his holy ministry, does not fail to renew his faith in its excellence.

What is he about to do? God, it seems, had reserved to Himself the privilege of granting grace and glory. "The Lord shall give grace and glory." But His minister shares with Him this high honor. What is the state of the souls which divine mercy sends to him? In what state may he hope to see them if he proves himself a worthy instrument of Jesus Christ in the work of their salvation? Those kneeling near his confessional remind him of that multitude of unfortunate people who lay in the porches of the pond of Bethsaida. (Joan. v. 3.) He is about to labor for the well-being of his brethren, with far better results than the angel who, by moving the waters of the pond, healed the bodily infirmities of men. However deeply rooted the ills of his penitents, he will give none of them cause to exclaim with the man who had been sick for eight and thirty years: "I have no man"—"I have not the proper physician to heal the deep miseries of my soul." The heart of the good confessor is, as it were, the heart of Jesus Christ Himself. Great will be the glory he gives to God, great the joy he gives to the angels, protectors of those souls, to Mary their Mother! No one waits in vain for him. Far from fearing fatigue he longs for it, comparing it to the fatigue of the harvester who is the more pleased when his load is heaviest. He needs patience, sympathy, gentleness, but he considers whose place he is about to occupy. Following the example of his divine Master, he takes upon himself the sorrows and infirmities of his people. The deeper the degradation of souls, the greater the compassion of his heart. In profound recollection he unites himself to Jesus Christ, and offers to Him all his actions, his doubts, his annoyances.

He is acquainted with the temptations of the confessor—weariness, vexation, curiosity, excessive severity or indulgence, im-

modest suggestions. Can the devil suffer himself to be cast out without an effort to injure or to trouble his conqueror? A good confessor is ready for the fight. *Jacula minus feriunt quae praevidentur.* (St. Gregory Hom. 35 in Evang.)

Second Point.—While in the confessional a good priest is recollected, yet ready to sacrifice himself in the interests of Jesus Christ and of his brethren. He frequently recalls to mind the following thoughts: "God sees me, God hears me, God judges me; what we do in secret shall one day be made known to the whole of mankind." If the weight of corrupt nature drags him down to evil, he lifts up his soul to God, renews his intentions, exercises greater vigilance, seeks rest in the wounds of Jesus. *Non inveni tam efficax remedium, quam vulnera Christi; in illis dormio securus, et requiesco intrepidus.* (St. Aug.) If he meets with difficulties, if he finds a sinner who is obstinate, a blind man who refuses the light, he has recourse to Him who can easily conquer the human will. Help Thou me, O Lord, help Thou me! I am doing Thy work, but without Thee I can not bring it to a happy accomplishment.

He knows also how to use those aspirations, those short ardent prayers, so well named ejaculatory prayers, for they are indeed as so many flaming arrows. Inspired by faith, borne aloft on the wings of confidence, they reach the heart of God. While kindly encouraging the penitent, prudently questioning him, patiently listening to him, the priest is also studying his disposition in order to properly guide him. He is attentive, makes all necessary inquiries, and strives to bring the penitent to the highest degree of perfection compatible with his state.

Great is the joy of a good confessor when he sees obstinate sinners yield to the invitation of the Holy Ghost. What a happiness to be able to restore those prodigals to the bosom of their Father! If, however, notwithstanding his zealous efforts, some hardened sinner perseveres in his sins, his sincere grief will be credited to him. Let him not imagine that he has lost his time. Suffering for God's sake is one of the greatest gains. The sinner could not be absolved, but he has not been sent away in despair. He has heard useful truths, he carries away with him the remembrance of the kindness he received. Continue to pray, good priest, true fisher of souls, hope that, later on, divine grace will accomplish that which it has commenced. Keep this truth in your mind, that to the reward promised to your efforts and pious intentions there will be added the reward due to a painful trial.

Third Point.—After leaving the sacred tribunal a good priest spends a short time in recollection, and as before beginning he

asked himself what he was about to do, now he ponders over what he has done. Experience, so valuable in the direction of souls, can not be acquired except by reflecting on circumstances which have been presented to us, and on our line of action in regard to them. It is therefore important for the confessor, especially in the beginning of his ministry, and on occasions when considerable time has been spent in hearing confessions, to ask himself questions: How did I receive, assist, and bear with the penitents? What may have been the impression created by such a word said by me, such a question put by me? On what grounds did I grant, defer, or refuse absolution? In giving that decision, did I make right application of the principles? When I had to cause sadness to a penitent, did I give him to understand that I felt sadder even than he? Was I sufficiently kind, charitable, compassionate? Was it the Spirit of God which spoke through my mouth? Was there not something too human in my language?

In thinking over the great function he has accomplished, a good priest returns thanks to God, begs pardon of Him for the faults he may have committed, and purposes to avoid them in the future. To Him he recommends the salvation of the souls of his penitents, become still dearer to him through the new bonds of charity which unite him to them. Should urgent duties prevent him from making this examination immediately after leaving the confessional, he ought to recite the following prayer of the Church: *Actiones nostras, quaesumus, Domine, aspirando praeveni et adjurando prosequere: ut cuncta nostra oratio et operatio a te semper incipiat, et per te caepta finiatur. Per Christum,* etc., and attend to it at the end of the day.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point. — Before entering the confessional renew your belief in the excellence of the faculty you are about to exercise. In what state are all those sick whom you see around the sacred pool? What do they expect of your charity? You may be more useful to them than the angel was to the sick of Jerusalem, who, by moving the water, healed their bodily infirmities. You need much patience and affability. Fill your soul abundantly with these virtues. Maintain tranquillity of mind, uniting yourself to the heart of Jesus, offering to Him what you are about to do and suffer for His glory. Be also on your guard against the temptations which may assail you.

Second Point. — While hearing confessions keep recollected, remember the presence of God. At the approach of temptation

do what St. Augustine was wont to do with great profit. *Non inveni tam efficax remedium, quam vulnera Christi. In illis dormio securus, et requiesco intrepidus.* Study the dispositions of the penitent; never lose heart, never become despondent. The reward is independent of success.

Third Point.—After a priest has left the sacred tribunal he meditates, and strives to render to himself an account of his ministrations. How did I receive, how did I assist, how did I bear with my penitents? What decisions did I give, on what principles were they grounded? He notices the faults he may have committed, and resolves to avoid them in the future. He humbles himself in the presence of God, returns Him thanks, recommends to His mercy the salvation of those souls for whose spiritual welfare he has been laboring.

MEDITATION LXXV.

MOTIVES OF A GOOD PRIEST IN DEVOTING HIMSELF TO THE SANCTIFICATION OF YOUTH.

1.—*The Desire of Jesus Christ, the Examples of the Greatest Saints.*
2.—*The Desires of the Church and of Society.*

First Prelude.—Let us go in spirit to the holy house of Nazareth, and at the sight of the attentions bestowed by the holy Virgin upon her Son, let us resolve to form the souls of the young according to the model of the infant Jesus, growing up in age and wisdom before God and man.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask, through the intercession of Mary, grace fully to comprehend and rightly to accomplish the important function of giving Christian education to the young.

First Point.—The desires of Jesus Christ, the example of the greatest saints. As the kings of earth have their favorite friends, so the King of heaven has His. These are the innocent souls. He willed that His predilection for children should be recorded in the most touching language in the Gospel. They hasten to Him from all parts, to hear His words and receive His blessings. Among that crowd of admiring and suppliant persons, there are mothers who beg of Him to bless their children. They are turned away by the disciples; soon, however, they rejoice when the Saviour justifies their apparent indiscretion. Jesus Christ directs benignant looks toward those little creatures, the beauty of their

souls causes His heart to beat with joy. "Suffer," He says, "suffer the little children to come to Me, forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." A passage is opened for them at once, they go to Him; contemplate them in the arms of Jesus.

Children thrice blessed! Blessed shall I be if I appreciate the favor granted me by my good Master, by making it my duty to educate the young, and thereby to prepare for Him faithful servants. Blessed shall I be if I comprehend how much honor and advantage are attached to this duty, and how easily, by its practice, I can secure for myself the affection of my sovereign Master and judge. I think I hear Him saying to me as He did once to St. Peter on the shore of the Lake of Genesareth, "If thou love Me, feed My lambs." Those children are Mine, My power created them, My providence preserves them in existence, My body is destined to be the food of their souls, My kingdom to be their inheritance. Watch over them, save them from the contagion of vice, be zealous, and by the aid of My grace develop the seeds of virtue which I have implanted in their hearts; you will in this manner help Me to save them. Give Me this evidence of your love. O my soul, what wilt thou answer Our Lord Jesus Christ? Wilt thou not respond to His desires? Will not the happiness of pleasing Him cause thee to forget all difficulties?

This reflection inspired men of the greatest sanctity and talent in the Christian Church with zeal for the education of youth. In his old age St. Jerome withdrew to Bethlehem in order to contemplate more easily the mystery of the infancy of Jesus Christ. While many came from distant countries to consult him, and admire his penitential life, he wrote to a lady of Rome, "Send me your little children; I shall take much pleasure in lisping with them the first truths of faith." St. Gregory did more still; though in delicate health and burdened by the government of the Church, he yet found time and strength to catechise the young people of Rome. St. Augustine, St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Xavier, St. Francis de Sales, Gerson, Bellarmine, Olier, Fénelon, thought they could not spend their lives in a more useful manner than in laboring for the sanctification of children. Listen to Gerson: "To bring up the son of a monarch, the presumptive heir of his crown, is an honorable function, but is not this child which I train to a virtuous life, the son of God, the heir of the heavenly kingdom?" And St. Francis de Sales said: "Believe me, the angels of the little children love with particular affection those who bring them up in the fear of God, and enable piety to saturate their tender souls."

How good it is for me, O my Jesus, to see myself associated,

through this ministry, to the great saints of Thy Church! A dearer blessing, however, is to find therein a means of satisfying the great desires of Thy heart.

Second Point.—The desires of the Church and of society. To bring up children in a Christian manner is to eradicate evil at its source, and to prepare better generations of men. As from Abraham there sprung a whole people of believers, so at times, from a well-educated child, there will descend a nation of just people. If those who had charge of leading to God the first steps of a Francis de Sales, a Xavier, a Vincent de Paul, had been untrue to their mission, if they had suffered vice to blight their innocence, to deprave their character so as to unfit them to carry out their great destinies, one shudders at the thought of the immense blessings of which the Church and all mankind would have been deprived. Many are the virtues, the acts of heroism, the good works already crowned in heaven, due to the sanctity of those chosen souls. And the sanctity of those chosen souls themselves was undoubtedly due in great measure to the Christian education they received in their early days.

You may say that you have none under your charge except children of the lowest class, who will never exert any influence except within a very narrow circle. Who can know? Vincent de Paul and a thousand others could not claim noble lineage. God is independent in the choice of the instruments of His mercy. Among that little flock surrounding you, He may see some souls which He will employ in teaching and sanctifying a multi ude of others. But even if you had positive knowledge that none of the children in your care will rise above an ordinary level, you could not measure the good results of your efforts. The high principles, the virtuous habits you inculcate, will be transmitted to their children, and in turn to their posterity. Behold holy traditions established, a series of Christian virtues perpetuated. Ages will reap what you have sown. "I have ever believed," said Leibnitz, "that, if education were improved, all mankind would be reformed." There is nothing truer. The future welfare of the Church and of society lies in education. Religious beliefs, sentiments, good and evil, all come from that source. Education forms the character of a nation. It is a source of life and death to states as well as to families. When will the world understand from what calamities it is saved, what benefits it receives from the clergy and religious congregations who devote themselves to the education of youth. Let us not depend upon the gratitude of the world, since we are sure of the gratitude of God.

Return thanks to God for calling you to this holy apostolate.

—Regret the little esteem you have had for it.—Resolve to exercise it henceforth as perfectly as ability will permit.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The desires of Jesus Christ, so well understood by His most faithful servants. The Son of God wished that His predilection for children should be recorded in the Gospel in the most touching language. How easy it is for me, then, to secure for myself the most tender affection of my Master and Judge. I can hear Him saying to me, "If thou love Me, give My lambs spiritual food." Why did St. Jerome, St. Gregory the Great, St. Augustine, think it such a privilege to teach children? They loved Jesus Christ.

Second Point.—The desires of the Church and of society. As from Abraham there sprung a nation of believers, so from a child well reared may come a nation of just people. God is independent in the choice of His instruments. In some one of your spiritual children He sees perhaps a future apostle. Even should he remain in an ordinary walk of life, he will transmit to others the lessons received from you. These in turn will hand them down to others, so that ages will gather the fruit of your sowing. The future welfare of the Church and of society lies in education. Faith, manners, good and evil, all owe to it their origin. Return thanks to God, who has called you to exercise an apostolate so glorious and so useful.

MEDITATION LXXVI.

OTHER MOTIVES FROM WHICH A GOOD PRIEST DEVOTES HIMSELF TO THE SANCTIFICATION OF YOUTH.

1.—*Youth Requires a Special Interest.*
2.—*Advantages to the Teacher.*

First Prelude.—Let us go in spirit to the holy house of Nazareth and, at the sight of the attentions bestowed by the Holy Virgin upon her son, let us resolve to form the souls of the young according to the model of the infant Jesus, growing up in age and wisdom before God and man.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask, through the intercession of Mary, grace fully to comprehend and rightly to accomplish the important function of giving Christian education to the young.

First Point.—For a Christian there is no age so interesting as youth. Three particular motives endear it to us: its innocence,

the dangers by which it is surrounded, and the great ease with which it may be trained.

I. Is there anything more innocent than a heart purified from the stain of original sin by baptism, and which has not yet committed any grievous actual sin. These are the ones of whom the Lord said: "My delights are to be with the children of men." Owing to early influences, some may have already fallen into sin, but vice has not yet found lodgment in their hearts. It may be that the Holy Spirit has been obliged to quit sanctuaries in which He loved to dwell, but He has not entirely forsaken them. He is willing at any time to take up His abode therein. Is not this a noble mission—to guard the innocence of the children of God, or to help them to regain it?

II. The time of childhood and youth generally decides the state of a man in "the eternal years." Education can be compared to a mould in which man receives his intellectual, moral, and religious features. He shall, according to the Scriptures, be in his old age that which education shall have made him in his youth. (Prov. xxii. 6.) If vice defiles his soul in his early years, it may infect his whole life, go down with him to the grave. Unfortunate youth! we blame thee, but who can but compassionate thee! The world is before thee with its perfidious charms. The devil wishes to have thee at death, and in order to secure thee he contaminates the days of thy youth. Thou art surrounded with false friends, with contagious examples, exposed to dangers on all sides.

To resist temptation one ought to have the fear of God, the hatred of sin, the maxims of religion deeply imprinted in his soul. What will become of a young man who, for lack of a Christian education, enters unarmed into the battle of life? What is there to look forward to in the future when a heart has never known the happiness of virtue, enjoyed the hopes of the life to come, or thought of the woes and delights of eternity.

Blessed, on the other hand, is he who from his youth has borne the sweet yoke of piety. He shall be, according to the scriptural expression, "as a tree planted near running waters"; it shall be covered with flowers in the spring, it will bear abundant fruit in the autumn; innocence shall embellish his youth, age will be distinguished by solid virtues. Should he have the misfortune to go astray, we may hope that he will return. A religious education will have prepared for him a powerful means of conversion, and gain him the grace of remorse for his transgressions.

III. We should not despair of the salvation of any one. Yet how many and great are the difficulties which stand in the way

of the conversion of some. A child has but one obstacle to overcome, that of levity. Patience is a rare virtue in youth. His soul is like new ground which cultivation enables to yield a hundredfold. It is a flexible plant which retains the shape it has once received. The heart of youth is thoroughly pure and susceptible of the best impressions. A child willingly submits to authority, and readily accepts the dictates and sentiments of those with whom he associates. It is easy to excite his best feelings by speaking to him of God, who became an infant, who died on the cross for us.

How easy to arouse fear of the Lord, compassion for those who suffer, gratitude and love, in souls already prepared by baptism to practise all Christian virtues. Interrogate zealous pastors and all will answer that none of their occupations gives them so much comfort as that of educating the young. The results of this ministry are of the happiest. I may, through God's grace, bring about the conversion of an old man who has led a life of sin; but in spite of his repentance a part of his life will, as far as eternity is concerned, always remain a deplorable waste, a permanent loss to God and eternity. Whenever a child is the object of my solicitude I ought to consider that my zeal may bring about the sanctification of its whole life. I become a factor and participant in all its good works.

Second Point.—There is no more profitable employment for the priest than the education of the young. It multiplies merits, affords abundant graces for the sanctification of our life and for our death. Consider, you apostles of the children, how admirable a lot has fallen to you.

It multiplies merits. It was through zeal, that is, through love of God and love for souls, that we devoted ourselves to the education of youth. Charity, being the soul of that devotedness, gives a supernatural character to all the sacrifices made for its sake. Our life is a sacrifice of self. We must unite mortification to charity, and no other life will gain us more merit in the kingdom of heaven.

It obtains abundant graces. God generally grants us graces in proportion to the good use we make of them for others. His love for our children is the measure of the graces He lavishes upon us. He opens the treasury of His grace for their sake, and those children themselves will become powerful intercessors for us. God can not resist the prayer of the young. "The mere presence of a pure soul before the sovereign majesty gains more than our loudest appeals." (St. James of Nisibe.)

I should ask my innocent hearers to pray for me when I teach

catechism. St. Francis de Sales used to ask frequently for the *small* but *effective* prayers of Mme. de Chantal's children. St. Philip of Neri called the little children his *aides-de-camp* for the conversion of sinners. Gerson would say to the many children whom he instructed, that by their prayers they would open for him the gate of paradise.

There is a rich treasure of benediction for life and death in store or those who devote themselves to the sanctification of youth. If, however, the children on whom you lavish so much care should happen to forget you on earth, your children in heaven could not fail to remember you, and will certainly pray most fervently for their benefactors. They will remember you and come to your aid in the last and supreme struggle, when you will stand so much in need of divine assistance. We can imagine ourselves listening to Tobias, after his long and perilous voyage, telling his father how grateful they ought to be to his faithful guide. "He conducted me, and brought me safe again . . . myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish . . . father, what wages shall we give him? . . . but I beseech thee, my father, to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of one-half of all things that have been brought." (Tob. xii.) It is a striking picture of what happens in heaven when the blessed see a good priest, a friend of their youth, about to close his mortal career. "He, who guided our first steps, O Lord, is about to appear before Thee. To him, next to Thee, we are indebted for our happiness. He guided and helped us along the perilous path of youth; he taught us to know and to love Thee. A cruel monster, Sin, was about to devour us, and he effected our deliverance. O Father, do Thou grant him glory and happiness in keeping with the incomparable blessings he bestowed upon us." Their prayer will be heard; God will give more to the saviours of the young than Tobias asked for the angel Raphael. God Himself shall be their exceeding great reward. Have I hitherto understood all the good which I can do in my humble sphere for children? Have I for them that kindness which opens their hearts and prepares them to love God through affection for His minister? Have I that patience which corrects defects with gentleness? When speaking to them in my instructions and exhortations, have I shown that earnestness and love for their welfare which excite interest, enlighten the mind, and produce lasting impressions? Have I aimed especially to inspire them with a lively horror for sin, a tender love for Jesus Christ, speaking to them in devout language of His holy mysteries? Did I treat the matter of their confession with all the importance which it deserves, and, when

I thought that they had fallen into any grievous fault, did I employ every means to prepare them, without delay, for holy absolution?

As a preparation for Mass, hear the remonstrance which Jesus Christ may have reason to make to you regarding this important point of your obligation, and promise to respond more effectively to His zeal for the sanctification of youth. *O piissime Jesu, quis ultro post te verecundabitur esse humilis ad parvulos? Quis tumescens et elatus de sua vel magnitudine, vel scientia, parvitatem deinceps parvulorum, ignorantiam, vel imbecillitatem audebit aspernari, quando tu, qui es Deus benedictus in saecula, in quo sunt omnes thesauri sapientiae et scientiae Dei absconditi, usque ad castissimos parvulorum amplexus beata brachia mansuetus inclinas atque circumligas?* (Gerson de pare. trah.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—From the standpoint of faith, there is no age so interesting as youth. Because of its innocence, of the dangers surrounding it, of the great ease with which it may be trained. There is nothing so pure, so captivating as the heart of the child. If vice has already injured his soul, the wounds inflicted are not very deep. It is generally in our early days that our destiny in "the eternal years" is decided. Dangers and sinful allurements surround the inexperienced and over-confident. How will a badly educated child escape the perils which threaten him? Blessed, however, is he who from his youth has borne the yoke of virtue. The soul of the young is, as it were, new ground, which only awaits cultivation to enable it to produce a hundred-fold. Should I bring about the conversion of a sinner advanced in years, I have no power over the past, and that part of his life which is gone remains a blank as regards God's interest. If I bring up a child properly, all his days will be sanctified, and I shall have a share in the good works which fill up his career.

Second Point.—No other ministry is so advantageous to the priest. He finds therein much merit, charity gives a supernatural character to everything he does, his life is a continual practice of abnegation and mortification. Death to him shall be full of hope and of happiness, for there are abundant graces attached to the prayers of innocent children.

MEDITATION LXXVII.

THE CARE OF THE SICK A PARAMOUNT DUTY.

1.—*Because They Call Forth the Tenderest Charity of the Pastor.*
2.—*Because Negligence would Cause Most Deplorable Consequences.*
3.—*Because in Caring for Them the Zeal of a Priest is Amply Rewarded.*

First Point.—Visitation of the sick considered objectively. Who are to be visited? What sort of a care is to be given them?

Priests, ministers of Jesus Christ, ought to be the imitators of His charity. Recall to mind what you have often seen: a sick man dejected, a prey to suffering, in need of many things, but particularly in need of the most important blessing, a tranquil mind and peaceful conscience. The pains which he endures, those which he fears, the thought that he is forgotten, even forsaken by the very ones bound to cherish him—everything plunges his soul in gloom. Nothing brings him relief. To a man so sorely afflicted the presence of a true friend is certainly a consolation. A pastor should act the part of a true friend toward the unfortunate ones who have so many claims on his sympathetic interest. They are members of his spiritual family; they are his children. They should be the objects of his solicitude and zeal, for in their troubles to whom will they turn if not to their father?

You may say that "such a one is an unruly member of the flock, a scandalous sinner who scoffs at religion and despises its laws." But his faith may revive. Consider how great will be his remorse, his terror, his torture of mind at the approach of the dreaded judgment of God! You may say: "He is an infidel, too obstinate and hardened to experience remorse, completely unconcerned about his eternal destiny." If this be the case, your compassion should know no bounds. You alone, in the grace of your ministry, can find help proportionate to the greatness of the evil. Begin at once. Kneel before the tabernacle, pour out your soul in prayer before the Saviour, supplicate Him to kindle in you the sacred fire which He came on earth to kindle; and then, rising, hasten to the help of a soul which the devil is trying to take away from you. Your charity will never have a more important duty to perform.

When one considers that the most precious of all graces is a happy death, that it is the complement of all other graces, imprinting on our virtues the seal of immortality; that, moreover, the most critical moment of our life is that moment in which it

ceases to exist; that eternity depends upon that moment, and in that decisive moment the devil assails us with deeper cunning and increased fury—it is evident that we can confer no blessing so great on the sick as in helping them to die a happy death. In a few days, perhaps in a few hours, that soul will pass from the time of mercy to the tribunal of justice. It will soon be impossible for this soul to acquire merit. In the few moments which remain, the loss or the profit will be of immense value for an endless future. Strengthen a sick man by your exhortations, by the administering of the Sacraments, thus enabling him to sanctify his sufferings, to purify himself from his sins, to discharge his spiritual debts and to overcome temptations.

One of these grievous temptations, if not overcome, would rob him of his crown. If he be in a state of sin, your duty is to rescue him, to save him from the greatest of all evils, to secure for him sovereign happiness. Everything pertaining to his salvation is to be satisfactorily settled. A good priest feels his best and most generous sensibilities aroused when he sees the great need his people have of his assistance in that supreme moment, and he also experiences a holy joy when he knows that the good done them through his holy ministry is made permanent by death, and will not be endangered either by their weakness or in the machinations of the evil spirit. Such are the reflections which kindle the zeal of the good shepherd, which fill his heart with pious emotions.

Second Point.—Terrible consequences of neglecting the sick. To neglect a dying man is a greater evil than other transgressions committed in the ministry. If you have failed to fulfil a certain obligation, there is a remedy, but through carelessness to have allowed a sick man to leave this world in mortal sin would mean to have committed an offence absolutely irreparable. What do you think of the evil, what do you think of the crime? You have allowed the moment of salvation which God, in His goodness, had reserved for that soul to slip by; it will never return; the soul is judged, the sentence without appeal.

If the corpse of the poor man cries for vengeance against the avarice that refused to give him to eat, how terrible will be the accusation which the unfortunate sinner will prefer against you before the tribunal of God! O Lord, he forsook me when I was most in need of his spiritual ministrations, and yet Thou hast appointed him to be the eye of the blind, the guide of the strayed traveler, the pastor that was to lead me to heaven. His duty was to enlighten my ignorance, to fortify my weakness, to aid me to accept death as the penalty justly due to my sins. Ah, if he had come, and spoken to me as a friend and a father, if he had told me

of the riches of Thy mercy for the greatest sinners, I also should have done penance. But he cruelly forsook me, he forsook me when my enemies pressed upon me from every side. For me Thou didst shed Thy blood, and he refused to make a slight sacrifice to save a soul which cost Thee so dear! What bitterness would there be in the terrible thought: One of my parishioners, I have cause to fear, is now in hell, and I, I, his pastor and father, am the one to blame for it. *Tot occidimus, quot ad mortem ire quotidie tepidi et negligentes videmus.* (St. Greg.)

Third Point.—For care bestowed upon the sick and the dying, a priest is amply rewarded. Whether considering the circumstances attending this ministry, or its many striking manifestations of grace, priests can always derive much consolation from it.

It is easy in health to forget God and the eternal truths. Business, pleasures, the hurry and the noise of the world, everything tends to hide or to obscure the truths of religion. In sickness the case is quite the reverse. A man shut up in his apartment, confined to a bed of suffering, which he fears he may not leave save to be carried to the grave, is more liable to accept the inspirations of grace. Illusions pass away, he sees things as they really are, and as human means are powerless to ward off death, he remembers the Creator of his life. The faith of his early days revives. Many are the sick to whom we may apply the words of the prophet, "I met with trouble and sorrow, and I called upon the name of the Lord." (Ps. cxvi. 3, 4.) I lived as if there were no God, I had no idea of His sovereign dominion, of my dependence on Him. But the great tribulation has come; seeing the phantom of all earthly things vanish before me, I have turned my thoughts toward the Lord, I have begun to fear His justice, to hope in His goodness, I have called upon Him to rescue me in my distress. "I called upon the name of the Lord."

The image of death, coming often before his mind, induces him to regulate the affairs of his conscience. Go now, zealous priest; he is ready to hear you. His lonely condition, his experience of the vanity of human things, the subsiding of his passions, his sickness itself, which arouses his gratitude to his benefactors —all these are circumstances favorable to the pious intentions of your zeal.

To minister to the sick is, moreover, a work most pleasing to the compassionate heart of Jesus Christ, and He loves to display therein the wonders of His mercy. God, the Creator and Redeemer, hates to destroy forever the work of His hands and the price of His blood. The more He resists the proud, the more indulgent He is to the humble and the helpless. Death is certainly

the great humiliation. Hence Providence brings about so many happy conversions. To this fact we should attribute that ardent charity which God infuses into the heart of the good priest when He sends him to a dying man. These priests, filled with zeal and piety, have the happiness of seeing people whom they attend in their last sickness, "dying the death of the just." How many admirable conversions were obtained at death, in presence of the scaffold, by the *poor priest* Bernard, by St. Francis de Sales, and so many others. "It were," said Fénelon, "a horrible presumption to hope for miracles of grace, but He who forbids us to expect them is sometimes pleased to perform them." The miracle of sinners saved at death is an every-day occurrence in the Church. (Boyer.)

Recollect yourself, see what has been wanting to your zeal in this matter. You are about to receive at the altar the adorable Physician who visited, consoled, and healed so many sick persons; beseech Him either to heal or to preserve your soul from a state of tepidity incompatible with your obligations, particularly with those regarding the care of your dying children. In order to perform a cure so profitable to the shepherd and to the flock, He needs only to say one word; that word He will speak, if we ask it with a lively faith. *Dic verbo, et sanabitur anima mea.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Care of the sick considered. Who deserve assistance? What kind of assistance should be given to them? Sad is the condition of the sick man who may be in need of everything, but who, above all else, needs peace of soul. Consider what he suffers and what he fears. He is the spiritual child of the priest, say not he is a great sinner, one who has given scandal. Let your compassion be as great as his misery. See how he requires your ministrations, think of the immense blessings you can confer upon him. The work to be done is to settle irrevocably the matter of his salvation.

Second Point.—Dreadful consequences which would follow negligence. If, owing to your tepidity, a soul should leave this world in a state of mortal sin, it would be an absolutely irreparable evil. What a misfortune! What terrible accusation will that reprobate soul bring against you at the tribunal of God, you, who ought to have been its saviour? *Tot occidimus, quot ad mortem ire quotidie tepidi et negligentes videmus.*

Third Point.—Every reward may be expected by the zealous priest for the care he bestows upon the sick and the dying. In health it is easy to forget God; in sickness one is more inclined

to accept His grace. The state of isolation, the experience he has had of the vanity of all earthly things, everything is a favorable preparation for the visit of the zealous pastor. Our ministrations to the sick are most pleasing to the compassionate heart of Jesus Christ. He loves, then, to display the wonders of His mercy.

MEDITATION LXXVIII.

GREAT ADVANTAGES A PASTOR DERIVES FROM HIS CHARITY IN ATTENDING THE SICK.

1.—*For Himself.*

2.—*For the Honor and Success of his Ministry.*

First Point.—Advantages for the pastor in attending his sick people. He finds in this ministry a source of most useful reflections, the occasion of practising sacerdotal virtues, and of gaining great merits.

I. Care of the sick, source of useful reflections. We preach to the faithful from the pulpit; they preach to us, in sickness, from their bed of suffering. Of each dying person may be said what Tertullian remarked of the early Christians. To see him is to hear. *Dum videtur, auditur.*

I enter a rich apartment, and the sound of the death-rattle falls on my ears. Who is this unfortunate? Some days ago he was one of the happy men of the world. He possessed fortune, popularity, home comforts; nothing was wanting to his happiness; the enjoyments of the past make him feel present sufferings more keenly. From the summit of human prosperity he will soon go down into the grave. Here is a source of reflection on the vanity of the things of earth. This man possessed them; what are they to him now? I hasten on to see another sick man; he is young. Constant health, a vigorous constitution, seemed to promise him a long life. He is dying, he is, maybe, a prey to violent fever, the victim of an accident. Science is powerless, he must die. Consider here the frailty of life, the uncertainty of the moment of death. The same can be said of the several other situations which I meet in visiting the sick. At times the justice of God frightens me by terrifying examples; often I am deeply affected at the admirable resignation of the sick and the dying, or am lost in admiration of God's ineffable mercy. How good it is to meditate beside their bed of sorrow!

II. Occasions to practise sacerdotal virtues. Not to speak of charity, the most excellent of virtues, a good pastor exercises in

attending the sick that lively faith which induces him to behold the Son of God under the veil of infirmities. You serve Him in the person of His suffering members. When you act through this motive, your intentions are of the purest; you keep all worldliness from your thoughts. The soul of your actions and attentions toward the sick is not friendship, nor propriety, nor self-interest, but the love of God only. You practise humility, meekness, patience, mortification. As our blessed Lord loved to visit the lowly rather than the great, the poor rather than the rich, the servant of the centurion rather than the daughter of the prince, so the good shepherd visits the cot of the poor as readily as the palace of the noble. He can say with St. Paul, "I made myself the servant of all; . . . to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak." And as he knows well that the sick are very sensitive, he watches all his words, and shows the greatest kindness and sympathy. Finally, when zealously attending the sick he fulfils a duty often very repugnant to nature.

III. Graces and merits attached to the care of the sick. These abundant graces are obtained for you through the gratitude of the souls who have gained the eternal kingdom, who will not forget what they owe you. Will the Lord not heed their prayers, will He refuse to reward you? One must be in heaven to appreciate the merit of your action. Consider the treasure of merits amassed in the discharge of a ministry acceptable to God. If there be merit in preserving virtue in young hearts, is there not a great merit in helping a sinner to die a good death? If each work of mercy, spiritual or corporal, has so much value in the sight of God, what are we to think of a duty which embraces them all in so conspicuous a manner?

O priests, be the consoling angels of your sick children. One day you shall yourselves be in need of the assistance which you are now asked to give to them. If you are tardy in going to assist them in their pressing necessity, fear lest Jesus Christ, wounded to the heart by your negligence, will permit you to die without the Sacraments, or that He will leave you to the care of a priest as cold and negligent as you are now. Blessed, on the other hand, is the compassionate pastor who devotes himself to the welfare of the dying members of his flock. In his own last moments the blessings of him who was about to perish, and whom he saved, will come down upon him. "The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me." (Job, xxix. 13.) Thou, Thyself, wilt come to him on his bed of sickness, and, with mother-like care, Thou shalt smooth the couch whereon he his suffering limbs. (Ps. xl. 4.) Thou shalt stand near that angel who came in Thy name

to comfort him in his agony; on the lips of his director Thou shalt place words of fervor, wise counsels. At last, when, in leaving this world, he will appear before Thee, Thou shalt say to him with a joyful heart, "I was hungry; thou gavest Me to eat. . . . I was sick; thou didst visit Me." This is the reason of My affectionate welcome to thee, this has acquired for thee a throne of eternal glory. "Blessed is he who understandeth concerning the needy and the poor: the Lord will deliver him in the evil day." (Ib.)

Second Point.—Advantages for the honor and success of his ministry. There is no sin in the priest which would so shock people as a neglect of the sick, of allowing them to die without assistance. Should they find you careless on this point, your reputation as a zealous priest would be destroyed forever. You might have good qualities, but they would be overlooked. The fact that one soul was forsaken by you at the time of its death would condemn you in the eyes of God and men.

On the other hand, nothing will so win the esteem and confidence of your people as your zeal and charity toward the sick and dying. Such conduct is admired not only by indifferent Christians, but even by infidels. Interest in the sick and dying proves to them more forcibly than arguments the divinity of our religion. In our other functions, which they do not understand, they see nothing extraordinary; but when a priest is attentive to the sick, eager to assist them day and night, regardless of the severity of the weheatr, of great distances, of poverty, of humble conditions, with no other end in view but their welfare, sacrificing his rest, his health, and perhaps life for them—such a sight surprises the unbelievers and touches them, and often leads to conversion.

Consider the influence of the zealous priest and the edification he gives the sorrowful household to which he brings such precious consolation. Children see their dear parents expiring in your presence, behold them dying, not merely resigned to God's will, but full of hope, full of joy. Will they ever forget what you did to allay the bitterness of the separation? That mother wept over the son who had been dead to the grace of God for years, but who, through your ministrations, was converted and died the death of the just. What words can tell her gratitude? The affection and esteem of your parishioners adds amazingly to the efficacy of your labors among them. They readily accept the words of him who so well represents the Lord whom he preaches. They are obedient to the voice of a pastor whom they love, and by whom they feel they are cherished. "Be not slow to visit the sick, for by these things you shall be confirmed in love." (Ecclus. vii. 39.)

O Lord Jesus, give to Thy people many of those charitable guides whose hearts are full of compassion. Grant that Thy faithful may be justified in applying to their pastors the words which were spoken of Thee, our eternal Priest: "He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows." (Is. liii. 4.) Send watchful guardians over Thy flock, for to-day its dangers are great. Send earnest, indefatigable laborers into Thy vineyard, for their work is now, more than ever, necessary to Thy glory, to insure the salvation of souls and the honor of Thy Church.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Advantages the pastor gains in caring for the sick. He finds therein a source of edification, the occasion of practising the virtues, of deserving rewards. Reflections on the nothingness of earthly things, the frailty of human life. How well it is to meditate by the bedside of the dying. What is the motive of the care of a priest for the dying? Not purely human friendship, or propriety, or interest. Charity is the real motive. He continually practises patience, meekness, mortification. He may apply to himself the words of St. Paul, "I made myself the servant of all; . . . to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak." Many are the graces which he receives, owing to the gratitude of those whom he has conducted to heaven. How great the merits of this angel, the comforter of his brethren. "The blessing of him who was ready to perish came upon me."

Second Point.—Advantages for the honor and success of his ministry. If a priest be negligent in fulfilling this part of his ministry, his reputation is gone; on the other hand, nothing gains for him so much esteem as his attention to the sick. Consider the happy influence he exercises on the members of the disconsolate family. Consider the edification he gives in the whole parish. They readily accept the words of him who is so perfect a representation of his Master.

MEDITATION LXXIX.

CONTINUANCE OF ZEAL IN CARING FOR THE SICK AND THE DYING.

1.—*Visit Them Readily.*

2.—*Administer the Sacraments.*

3.—*Continue to Assist Them Even After They have Received the Last Sacraments.*

First Point.—Visiting the sick. A good pastor prepares his people for those visits. How to make them.

Pastors ought to be mindful of the recommendations of the Holy Ghost. "Be diligent to know the countenance of thy cattle." (Prov. xxvii. 23.) If pastors visited the families of their parish more frequently; if they instructed their parishioners on the necessity and importance of sanctifying the time of sickness, and of receiving the consolations of religion in due time; if they spoke to them of the obligations of both priest and people in such circumstances, they would not so often be grieved by being called too late to visit the sick, or by witnessing those manifestations of perplexity and dread which should be entirely foreign to visits intended to bring consolation. The right spiritual feelings are sufficient to draw the attention of pious friends and relatives to this matter, and they hasten to inform the pastor of the condition of the sick; but if this be not the case, a good pastor appeals to honor and humanity, for he must know when and where his presence is necessary. He wants his people to feel that he has for them the heart of a father, that he is bound to sacrifice everything for their happiness, and that he is determined to fulfil this obligation; that they should not fear to annoy him by calling him out at an undue hour; that they should rather consult the salvation and comfort of the sick than their pastor's health or convenience. If he has had to go on an unnecessary journey, he is careful not to show annoyance. Why should he complain? Another jewel is added to his crown; the angels counted his steps, God witnessed his charity.

The visit should be promptly made; for the delay of one moment might occasion the loss of heaven for some poor soul. Often, alas! this awful misfortune has occurred, owing, perhaps, to idle conversations, prolonged recreations, unnecessary absence. When there is question of bringing forgiveness to the guilty, of

assisting the dying, of giving to them the Viaticum, nothing ought to delay a good pastor. Everything should bear the impress of charity and prudence. In approaching the sick, let your appearance be grave and compassionate, free from sadness, which would increase their anxiety, and from a gayety which would induce them to believe that you are unconcerned about their sufferings. Endeavor at firs to gain their confidence, offering to do some service or kindness for them, if it be in your power. In any case be sure to speak to them of the peace which reconciliation with God brings to the soul, and of the happy influence it may have on the health of the body itself. It may be that the patient expected to find no kindness from you, seeing how careless he has hitherto been in responding to your zeal. For this very reason your paternal words and the evidence of your devotedness will create upon him a deep impression.

Second Point.—Administration of the Last Sacraments. If the sickness presents any alarming symptoms, a good priest at once prepares the patient to receive the Last Sacraments. Arms are needed during war, remedies during sickness. After war or sickness there is no longer need of either. A priest should not delay; sickness soon exhausts the strength, dulls the senses, obscures the intelligence. A priest should feel very uneasy about the salvation of a sinner grown old in crime, who receives the Sacraments in a lethargic condition. A priest should be kind and patient, but always resolute in such circumstances, and never allow timidity or bashfulness to prevent him from speaking "as a man having authority." Many a sick man, supposed to be irreligious, has been surprised when, during the first visits of his pastor, much was said about other matters, but nothing about his soul. Speak of confession, and hear it as soon as possible. The first confession will have to be, perhaps, followed by many others.

To assist the sick properly is really one of the most precious gifts of heaven. It supposes a rich fund of charity, rare prudence to choose the means and the time, great discretion in regard to what is to be said and left unsaid. It requires piety and kindness to inspire confidence, to comfort, to touch, to convert, and to enable a man to do in a few moments that which should have been the work of his whole life. A good priest takes upon himself the burden of reconciling to God a man who is almost incapable of aiding himself. He relieves the patient of the trouble of examining his conscience, by assuming that labor himself. He tells him not to have any anxiety concerning faults which he may have forgotten. The patient experiences unexpected comfort when he

understands how easily he has fulfilled a duty which the evil spirit had represented to him as exceedingly painful. In exhorting the sinner to repentance a good pastor is earnest and gentle, striving to create motives of contrition chiefly from the sufferings of Jesus Christ; his own heart inflamed with sacred love, a priest reminds the sinner of the mercy and patience of that good Master in waiting for him, of the generous welcome which the prodigal receives, of the joy in heaven over one sincere conversion. He sustains confidence by dwelling on the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. Ah, how inspired are the words which a fervent priest finds in his heart, in presence of a dying man, when, holding the crucifix in his hands, he shows it to him and explains the great sacrifice it calls to mind.

To the grace of pardon he adds the grace of communion. He brings Our Lord in the Holy Eucharist as the Physician of our souls as well as of our bodies. *Morbos omnes depellit . . aegrotos curat.* (St. Cyr.) He inspires and excites the desire of receiving this august Sacrament. How many cures have been effected by the reception of the holy Viaticum! St. Gregory Nazianzen relates that his father was so healed.

It may, however, appear imprudent or useless to the priest to buoy up the patient with the hope of being cured. He should tell him then that God is coming to give Himself to him as a Saviour, before summoning him to judgment; that He, therefore, offers to pronounce on him a sentence of salvation.

It is also quite important to let him know and appreciate the effects of Extreme Unction. *Gratia est Spiritus Sancti,* says the Council of Trent. *Cujus unctio delicta, si quae sint adhuc expianda, ac peccati reliquias abstergit; et aegroti animam alleviat et confirmat magnam, in eo divinae misericordiae fiduciam excitando, qua infirmus sublevatus, et morbi incommoda ac labores levius fert et tentationibus daemonis, calcaneo insidiantis, facilus resistit; et sanitatem corporis interdum, ubi saluti animae expedierit, consequitur.* (Sess. xiv. c. 2.) It is sad to reflect how great are the blessings of which many Christians are deprived at death, either through their own ignorance, or through the unfortunate negligence of their pastor.

Third Point.—Assistance to be afforded the sick in their last moments. This is always useful and sometimes necessary. A good priest does not imagine he has fulfilled all his duty toward the sick when he has given them the Last Sacraments. The devil does not quit the bedside of the dying man. Though held in abeyance, his enmity urges him to remain to the last, "knowing that his time is short." (Ap. xii. 12.) O pastor of souls, let the charity of Jesus Christ animate you. Be near that soul to guard it. Leave

it not, if possible, till you have opened for it the gate of the Church triumphant; imitate toward it the constant care of its guardian angel. Study the disposition of that soul, study the attacks of the enemy; to despair you should oppose hope; to excessive fear, confidence; to presumption, wholesome fear. Above all, speak to great sinners of the infinite mercy of God; it is incredible with what treacherous cunning the enemy of man endeavors to rob the dying sinner of the hope of salvation. Yet the Church attributes to the Sacrament of Extreme Unction the peculiar grace of imparting confidence: *Magnam divinae misericordiae fiduciam excitando.*

We have many books containing aspirations and short prayers adapted to the wants of the dying, but they are of little good on the lips of a lukewarm priest. In themselves darts of fire, they lose all their heat in passing through a frozen heart.

The *Memoriale de la vie sacerdotale* sums up admirably the duties of the pastor toward the sick after they have received the Last Sacraments: *Sacro ministerio impleto, aegrum sanctissimo sacramento refectum et unctione levatum ne derelinquas.—Filium Deo parturivisti filium hunc, quasi banda mater, nutrire satage; jamque praeparatum magis ac magis justifica et sanctifica.—In infirmitate plus laborat diabolus sciens quia modicum tempus habet.—Igitur aegrotum frequenter visita, ut illum contra insidias inimici robores, in gratia Dei confirmes, in doloribus juves, in anxietatibus consoleris, et passim etiam adhuc absolvas.—Sanctae fidei, spei, charitatis et contritionis actus suggere, desideria aeternae beatitudinis inspira.—Subjectionem divinae voluntati commenda, ad patientiam hortare; Christi Domini crucem saepius porrige. Dei Matris Sanctorumque suffragia proipso postula; sacras indulgentias, si potestas tibi sit applica.* (C. lviii.)

In your Mass, address this prayer to Jesus Christ: *Bone Jesu, qui languentibus olim misericorditer opitulatus es, inflamma et me et consacerdotes meos simili charitatis ardore, ne gravemur afflictis illam ferre opem, quam laudabis et remunerabis in die judicii.* (Scut. fid. hebd. 3, post. Epiph.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Visit the sick readily. Those visits should be prepared for by obeying the recommendation of the Holy Ghost, "Be diligent to know the countenance of thy cattle." Instruct the faithful concerning the duties they have to fulfil toward the sick. Let them be attended to at once; the delay of a moment may be the cause of the eternal loss of a soul. Everything should be done prudently, charitably. Let your appearance be grave and compassionate, equally free from sadness and gayety.

Second Point.—Administration of the Sacraments. If the sickness be serious, a good priest prepares his sick people at once to receive them. The act of ministering to the sick is a precious gift. It supposes a rich fund of charity, rare discretion, much kindness, to gain confidence, to afford comfort. After reconciling the sinner to God, a pastor brings him holy communion, presenting the Saviour to him as the true Physician of the body as well as of the soul. He endeavors to excite in the patient a desire to receive Extreme Unction, by giving proper instructions regarding its nature and effects.

Third Point.—Assisting the sick in their last moments. This assistance is always useful, sometimes necessary. The devil does not leave the bedside of the dying man. O pastor of souls, remain near that poor soul, to defend it. Imitate the zeal and constancy of its guardian angel.

SECTION FIFTH.

THE SUFFERING OF JESUS CHRIST ON EARTH SUPPORTS AND STRENGTHENS US IN THE TROUBLES AND TRIBULATIONS OF OUR APOSTOLIC MINISTRY.

PREAMBLE.

The examples of Our Lord in the early mysteries of His life tend to form true holiness in us; those of His public life must have inspired us with zeal for the salvation of souls, and have taught us that we must co-operate in their sanctification. The following meditations on His life of suffering will help us to obtain these two objects—which a good priest never separates. They will strengthen us by pointing to the cross as to the book of the elect, and the support of apostolic men. In order, however, to derive great profit from them, let us keep before our minds two considerations, the first from St. Bernard, the second from St. Thomas.

I. The Passion of Jesus Christ is not only a fact which was accomplished nineteen hundred years ago; it is a fact ever contemporaneous, ever present. Jesus Christ, says St. Paul, does not belong to one epoch, but to all times. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." St. John was justified in saying that the divine Lamb was "slain from the beginning of the world." Why should we not say that He continues to be slain even now, and shall be as long as the world will exist? According to the admirable remark of St. Bernard, that which ceases not to renew us by its divine virtue is ever new, that which continually pours down upon us torrents of light and of grace neither passes away nor grows old; such is the Passion of Jesus Christ. It is ever with us through the holy Sacrifice and the Sacraments. Let us, therefore, bring those sorrowful scenes nearer to our minds; let us fancy they are enacted before our eyes. Let us behold, as if visible to our eyes, the blood streaming from His crucified body, the wounds, the thorns, the nails.

II. Nor let us forget that the same Redeemer who suffered for all men in general suffered for each one of us in particular. Generally speaking, the benefit granted to a multitude simply creates a multitude of ungrateful people. But from this great benefit, this unparalleled sacrifice, it is our duty to derive immense blessings applicable to ourselves personally. There is no one to whom the Son of God did not wish to apply the merits of His death as abundantly as if He had suffered it for him alone. Let us hear St. Thomas: *Quid interest si Christus aliis praestitit, cum, quae, tibi sunt praestita, ita integra sint et perfecta, quasi nulli alii ex his aliquid fuerit praestitum? Et ideo . . . quod omnibus est impensum, unusquisque debet sibi adscribere.* (3, p; q. 1, a. 3.) Why should I not say to myself with St. Paul, "He loved me and gave Himself up for me"? (Gal. ii. 20.) Through love of me He engaged in this strife, for me He shed tears and blood in such profusion, for me He expired in ignominy and torments. In the midst of His sufferings His all-seeing eyes distinguished me through the course of coming ages, and for me He offered Himself to His Father, as if I alone had needed redemption.

By uniting together these two methods I have every reason to hope for the best results from meditating on the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

MEDITATION LXXX.

THE MYSTERY OF THE CROSS AND THE ZEAL OF THE PRIEST.

1.—*The Mystery of the Cross an Incentive to Zeal.*
2.—*It Enlightens It.*
3.—*It Comforts the Priest.*

First Point.—The mystery of the cross an incentive to zeal. When it is incumbent on a priest to defend the honor of God, his earnestness in the discharge of this duty will always be in proportion to his realization of God's perfection. The perfections of God are nowhere so conspicuous and striking as in the mystery of Our Saviour's sufferings. Consider how grand and princely is the character of Him who received honor and glory through the humiliations of Calvary. Think of the wisdom, power, justice, and tender compassion displayed by Christ toward man. After due consideration of the dignity and holiness of Him who suffered such awful treatment, we may well exclaim in fear and dread,

"Just Father, the world knoweth Thee not." On the other hand, ponder on the inexhaustible treasure of His charity. An offended God takes the place of him who offended Him. He Himself atones for an outrage inflicted by human beings, and His blood becomes our ransom. To human minds the charity of God seems incomprehensible. It is but just to say that the death of Christ on the cross is the most perfect manifestation of the attributes of God.

If the priest intends to speak of the evil of sin, let him study its frightful consequences while standing in spirit on Mount Calvary, contemplating the death of Christ. Think of it! "The death of Jesus Christ caused, renewed, rendered useless by sin!" (Bourdaloue.) The priest who has thoroughly studied the heinousness of sin does not wonder at the astounding piety of the saints, at their willingness to practise any mortification to spare God the outrage of even *one* sin, and save men from the evil and guilt of its commission.

When there is question of the salvation of souls, it is from the wounds of Jesus Christ dying that you will learn to know their value, since their value is equal to the price paid for them. We know many devout souls who would turn to their crucifixes and weep bitterly if they heard others speaking of one who has fallen into mortal sin. They have been heard to exclaim, amid sobs, "Alas, that dear soul for which my Saviour died is lost!" Unable to bear the distressing thought, they cast themselves upon their knees, and pray for the conversion of that sinner. In place of thinking of one soul, represent to yourself, O priest of God, the incalculable number of souls which sin has separated from God; next think of the reproaches and torments suffered by Our Saviour; count His painful steps in the streets of Jerusalem on the way to Calvary; recall to mind His tears, His groans; see the thorns and nails which tore His sacred flesh, the spittle which defiled His countenance; feel the pain of His body, the anguish of His heart. Say to yourself, then, if these souls are not saved, all the sufferings of Jesus Christ for them are useless! No benefit will they derive from them; nay, their torments shall be incomparably greater than if the Son of God did not become man for them.

Filled with compassion for that affliction of the heart of Jesus, hear Him saying to you through one of His prophets, "See if there be a sorrow like unto My sorrow;" and through another, "I have labored in vain." I lived in poverty, I died in ignominy and in the most cruel tortures; all this I wished to do to save souls, and I will not save them. I was willing to ward off the awful sentence which the justice of My Father must pronounce against them, and

now, alas! their condemnation shall be the more severe. Unfortunate souls! to know the extent of My sufferings, one ought to know the extent of My love for you. To die without saving you, to shed My blood for you, with the terrible consciousness that it shall cry for vengeance against you, this is the most intolerable of My torments; this is the part of My chalice which I would have "pass away from Me." To you, O My priest, to you especially, it belongs to mitigate this bitter sorrow.

Pray, labor, sacrifice yourself for the salvation of souls, and you shall comfort the Saviour in His agony more effectually than the angel in the Garden of Gethsemane.

Second Point.—Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ enlightens our zeal by teaching us from what source it draws its principal efficacy. It were a great error to believe that eloquence, power of persuasion, miracles, are the real means of spreading God's kingdom on earth. Our Lord possessed all those means in an infinite degree of perfection for the space of three years; through many fatigues and with much constancy He employed them, yet what was the result? How many disciples did He gain, and what was their worth? He suffers. He dies. Immediately things are changed. He is raised on the cross, and He draws everything to Himself. The world is shaken to its center at the voice of His sorrows, the world is renewed. *Et renovabis faciem terrae.* It was necessary that Christ should suffer. Unless the grain of wheat had fallen into the ground and died, never would the Church have gathered in that rich harvest of holy souls which shall last to the end of time.

Ministers of souls, do not be deceived; you shall not be saviours of souls, save by following in the footsteps of your Master. You also must be *men of sorrows.* Your trials and humiliations contribute more powerfully to the conversion of sinners and the perseverance of the just than the use of all gifts, not excepting the gift of miracles. Experience has never failed to demonstrate that success in the apostolic field is always in proportion to the sufferings of the laborer in that field. Paul is a vessel of election which will "carry the name of the Lord before nations and kings." (Acts, ix. 15.) Why? Jesus Christ tells us. "For I will show him what great things he must suffer for My name's sake." The word *for,* according to interpreters, points out the cause of his election. "I have destined him to gain so many triumphs over hell, only because I saw him willing to suffer much for the glory of My name." (Corn. a Lap.) Indeed, St. Luke represents to us the great Apostle tracing the line of his trials with drops of his blood, and the mention of the peoples which he converted. St. Paul always unites

the two, so that to him may be applied the beautiful saying of Tertullian, "His wounds make his conquests; hardly has he received a wound but he covers it with a crown; when he sheds his blood he acquires new palms; his victories are more numerous than the acts of violence inflicted by his enemies." *Corona premit vulnera, palma sanguinem obscurat, plus victoriarum est, quam injuriarum.*

The same is true of all the other evangelical laborers. We read in the office of St. John Chrysostom, *In exilio Chrysostomus incredibile est et quanta mala perpessus sit et quam multos ad Jesu Christi fidem converterit.* In the office of St. Francis Regis, *Vix credibile est quot probra ludibriaque pertulerit.* There is the cause; let us see the effects. *Innumerabiles homines aut calviniana lue infectos, aut perditis moribus corruptos, ad catholicam fidem et ad Christianam pietatem traduxit.* Suffering brings everything to maturity. It is only within the shadow of the cross and when quickened by the dew of tears and even by the shedding of blood that the words of God prosper. To save souls, and especially to save our own souls, we must undergo suffering. The economy of human redemption is based upon suffering. Why, then, should priests give way to discouragement when they meet with opposition and difficulties, since these are inseparable from every holy enterprise? "Rejoice, being partakers of the sufferings of Christ." (1 Pet. iv. 13.)

Third Point.—Meditation on Our Saviour's sufferings comforts us in our labors. This meditation generally brings success, but even if success be denied us for a time, it will come to us in the future.

It seems a natural thing that God, in a special manner, esteems and aids the priest who, through frequent meditation, understands and appreciates His holy designs. Such a priest will receive from God the inspiration, the settled purpose to begin certain enterprises, which will have His blessing. He will send suggestions for the best plans to be adopted for their permanent success. God so arranges things as to place at the command of such a priest all the elements and essentials of ultimate success.

A noticeable feature in human nature is that we like to speak of those things in which we are interested, of those people we love and esteem. If you meditate on the sufferings of Our Lord, you will love to recall them to your mind, to dilate on them with tender pity. Now, "the word of the cross to them indeed who perish is foolishness, but to them who are saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor. i. 18.) This word has a powerful influence on minds and hearts. It restrains the most violent passions and

puts to flight the whole army of sin made up of "the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life." *Est tanta vis crucis, ut, si ante oculos ponatur . . . nulla concupiscentia, nulla libido, nullus furor nulla superare possit invidia; sed continuo ad ejus praesentiam, totus ille peccati et carnis fugatur exercitus.* (In cap. 6, Joan.) There is no better way to vanquish the obstinacy of sinners than to speak to them of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. The Passion of the Son of God, says St. Bernard, continues to shake the earth and to rend rocks asunder. *Quis tam irreligiosus, qui non compungatur? Quis tam insolens, ut non humilietur? . . . Nempe adest Passio Domini usque hodie terram movens, petras scindens.* (Ser. 4, Hec. sac.)

If, however, you can not see any signs of success, and even if you can not cherish the hope that others will reap what you have sown, what should be your conduct? *Nihil adeo grave*, says St. Gregory, *quod non aequanimiter toleretur, si Christi passio ad memoriam revocetur.* Remember, during your trial, that the lesser the consolations in time, the greater will be the glory and joys in eternity. You drink of the bitter chalice of Jesus Christ. You participate in the great sorrows of Christ in the garden and on Calvary. He treats you as He has ever treated His dearest friends, giving you another mark of resemblance to Him. This surely is not an insignificant favor; you enjoy in your affection the sweet sign of predestination. *Electos Dei cernimus et pia agere, et crudelia pati.* (St. Greg.)

Resolution.—Adopt the crucifix as your choicest book of reading and meditation. If ever you feel earnestness for your own sanctification, zeal for the salvation of souls, your love of the cross, growing cold, reanimate your devotion by the contemplation of the sufferings of Jesus Christ. Ask it particularly of His Sacred Heart when you are united to Him in the greatest of all the Sacraments.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ inflames the zeal of the priest. Whether he aims at procuring the glory of God or battling against sin, or to bring about the sanctification of souls, the mystery of the cross gives us the highest idea of the glory of God. Consider how great He must be who gained glory and honor by His humiliations on Mount Calvary. Let us study the frightful consequences of sin at the foot of the cross. The death of a man-God, caused, renewed, made useless by sin. The cross teaches the value of souls, for their value is equal to what they cost.

Second Point.—Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ enlightens our zeal. It reveals to us the very source of its efficacy.

During the years of miracles, of preaching, of blessings, the Saviour had gathered around Him only a few disciples. He suffers, He dies, He draws everything to Himself, and the world is renewed. "Christ should suffer." The priest, in order to save souls, must be also a man of sorrows. Let us think on St. Paul, St. John Chrysostom, St. Francis Regis. The economy of man's redemption is based upon suffering.

Third Point.—Meditation on the sufferings of Jesus Christ comforts the priest. God reserves special blessings for the priest who faithfully meditates on the sufferings of Christ. We love to speak of the object of our love. Now, according to St. Paul, the cross is "the power of God for those who are saved." The Passion of Jesus Christ continues still to rend the rocks asunder and to shake the earth. Should our labors be fruitless for our brethren, they will procure rewards for ourselves.

MEDITATION LXXXI.

JESUS CHRIST IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES.

1.—*We should Enter into His Interior Sufferings.*
2.—*What We should do in Time of Affliction.*

First Point.—We should compassionate the interior sufferings of Jesus Christ. They are excessive. They are our work.

I. The sufferings of Jesus Christ are excessive. What a change has suddenly taken place in the interior of the God-man, heretofore so calm, so superior to earthly events. Suppressing the feeling of happiness produced by the beatific vision, by a miracle reducing Himself to a condition capable of suffering, He gives Himself up to sadness; His soul is troubled; for the first time in His life Jesus utters a complaint. He seeks solitude and flies from it. He returns to His disciples and then He leaves them; wherever He goes He is overwhelmed with anguish. He would pour His sorrows into the heart of a friend, but His apostles, apparently indifferent, are fast asleep, and have no word of comfort. Holy Father, this is Thy well-beloved Son, and it is for Thy glory that He suffers; wilt Thou not comfort Him? He speaks to Thee, Thou dost not answer Him; He calls upon Thee, Thou seemest deaf to His voice. All alone, without aid, He scarcely knows where to turn the thoughts of His saddened heart. Heaven, earth, hell, the past, the present, the future, all things cause Him the deepest desolation. His body grows weak with the burden,

He falls to the ground, He moans, and, though He has so ardently sighed for the day of His immolation, He trembles with fright. A sweat of blood trickles from His whole body, penetrates His garments, bedews the earth. Behold Him stretched on the ground, pale, exhausted, almost lifeless.

Who is this in such agony? One unknown, one a stranger to me? O Jesus, O my Master, O Thou, most amiable among the children of men, can I be without compassion for Thy sorrows? When wilt Thou soften in me this heart of stone? When wilt Thou give me a heart susceptible of holy affections? Tenderness of heart toward Jesus Christ in His sufferings is the distinctive mark of all His friends and of all good priests. Ask it for me, O you priests in heaven, who did so often mingle your tears with the tears and blood of Jesus Christ! His sufferings should all the more afflict me, since it was I who caused them.

II. If I ask the Saviour what brought this agony upon Him, He answers me through His prophets, "The torrents of iniquity troubled Me." (Ps. xvii. 5.) If I ask His Father, He will give me the same answer and say: "For the wickedness of My people have I struck Him." (Is. liii. 8.) Jesus Christ in the Garden of Olives, Jesus Christ the universal Penitent, sees the iniquities of the world committed through all ages, the sins of all states of life, of all conditions; He sees the sins of the priests and of lay people, the sins of the young, the sins of the old; the sins committed in all places; the excesses of every passion, the haughtiness of pride, the violence of anger, the infamies of lust, the hard-heartedness of avarice. Nothing escapes Him. He must see and suffer for all. He beholds every excess, every degree of corruption and perversity, the circumstances of all sin. If St. Peter wept so bitterly when converted by a look of His Master, if life became unbearable to some of the saints at the remembrance of their faults, because they had had a glimpse of the divine perfections outraged by sin, what shall we say of Him who, being God, alone could fathom God's infinite graces, who alone could know all the respect, love, and obedience which are due to Him, and finally who alone could understand how black a crime is the rebellion and ingratitude of sinners toward God. Jesus not only sees but feels all the crimes and iniquities of mankind. "The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of us all." For such is the essence of the eternal covenant between God and His Son, that He became Our Redeemer only by accepting all our iniquities as if they were His own, and, in His character of God and man, by bearing the shame and punishment due to our sins. He is condemned to feel in His heart and in all His being, the pains which sinners would experience

were the sanctity of God made manifest to them, and were they obliged to atone to His justice.

Thou didst see me at that hour, O my Jesus! Among the sins of all other men Thou didst distinguish my own, and how deeply did they wound Thy Sacred Heart, for in committing them I was guilty of the greater abuse of grace, since I am obliged to love Thee more than others love Thee. Thou hast wept over my numberless crimes, over those crimes the memory of which pursues me always. "My sin is always against me." Is it not also my duty to weep over them? O my Lord, I detest them with all the strength of my soul. To Thy sorrow I unite all the contrition which I experience through Thy grace. To all the joys of the world I prefer it; nay, to all the consolations which might allay its bitterness; and at the sight of Thee, crushed under the weight of my crimes, I understand that nothing is so acceptable and so appropriate as a humble and contrite heart.

Second Point.—What we should do in time of affliction; where to seek comfort. Jesus Christ teaches us in the Garden of Olives; watch, depend not on men; pray, give yourself up to God.

I. As it happens that nature, when it suffers, leads us almost against our will to seek relief from affliction, we are apt to give way to impatience, and to do and say many things which afterward we have reason to regret. How important it is, at such times, to watch over all the emotions of our souls! This is the first lesson given us by the Saviour in the garden—"Watch." Watch over your temper, to suppress its outbreaks; watch over your tongue, so as to keep silence or to use it to praise and bless the Lord; watch over your heart, so as to banish from it every feeling of impatience or resentment; watch over your reason, enlightened by faith, so that in your present adversity you may recognize a grace and blessing of God.

II. Jesus leaves the greater number of His disciples at the entrance to the garden. What do we gain by making known our troubles and grievances to many people? After the few moments of satisfaction we take in the relation of our troubles and the expressions of pity from others, we are forced to fall back upon ourselves. The sorrow returns, and returns with greater poignancy owing often to a troubled conscience, which is generally more or less disturbed by the telling of our grievances. It is much more salutary to suffer in silence. A trouble which one knows how to keep secret, or to mention to God alone in prayer, is the source of many blessings.

One may, however, open his mind to a friend, if this friend is carefully chosen. He should be a still greater friend of God

than of ourselves. The three apostles whom the Saviour took with Him were chosen disciples, and yet they brought Him but little comfort. When He goes back to them He finds them asleep. See what men are, and what is to be expected of them. Our heart should place its dependence on God, for God alone can restore to it the blessings of peace.

III. Jesus speaks to His Father. Let us go to God, to Him alone let us complain, from Him alone let us hope for peace. Jesus prays: consider how He prays. His prayer is *humble*. He lies prostrate on the ground. *Procidit in faciem suamorans.* What annihilation of His humanity in the presence of the divine majesty! His prayer is *devout*. My Father, "Abba, Father!" He punishes me, but He is still my Father; He strikes me, but He still loves me; in the midst of my trials His love is still boundless. Why should I set limits to my confidence? Were it necessary to send legions of angels to rescue or defend me, He will do it, since I place entire confidence in Him. His prayer is *persevering*. The Saviour prays three times. "He prayed the third time, saying the self-same words." He prays up to the moment that they arrest Him. I will not yield to weariness in prayer, since God does not grow weary listening to me. The Saviour's prayer was efficacious. If the Father does not take away the chalice from Him, He sends Him an angel to comfort Him. After this heavenly visit Jesus seems to be a different person. How dauntless in presenting Himself to His enemies. "Arise, let us go." He will suffer the most horrible torments without complaining, He will ask forgiveness for His executioners. This is grace far greater than deliverance from death. My prayer, when well made, is never fruitless; I obtain what I ask, or still greater favors.

IV. Entire reliance on Providence. "Father, be it done to Me according to Thy will, not to mine." "Not My will, but Thine, be done." Consider how admirable is this sentiment, how worthy of the Son of God! There is nothing more divine, than so much reluctance to suffer, united to such wonderful resignation in suffering. If Our Lord Jesus Christ had manifested less repugnance, we should have exclaimed: It is impossible to imitate Him. It is in our power to imitate Him. Let us be resigned always to the will of God. We may pour out our hearts to God in our afflictions, but let us resign to Him the care of our destinies. Thou, O Lord, shall be my support, my comforter, my Father, and my friend. I, acknowledge that the greater the trials and afflictions Thou sendest to some people, the greater in proportion is Thy love for them. In this manner Thou dost withdraw them from love of earthly things in order to draw them near to Thee. Blessed trials

inflicted by my God, my Father, wherein I discover more love than severity.

Resolution.—In my troubles I will seek comfort in God alone.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—We should enter into the mental torments of Jesus Christ. They are extreme, they are our work.

I. His sufferings are extreme. He permits an earthly sorrow to enter His heart. Everything in His great soul seems troubled. He finds no comfort in His disciples, or in His Father. He falls on the ground, exhausted, nearly dying, blood runs from all His pores. Who is this desolate being? Is He unknown to me? O Jesus, can I be without compassion for Thy sorrow?

II. His sorrows are my work. In the Garden of Olives Jesus sees all the sins of the world. Through His infinite knowledge He is aware of their enormity. No circumstance, no degree can escape Him. Some saints thought life unbearable at the remembrance of their faults because they had had a glimpse of those divine perfections outraged by sin. Oh, what a torment for Jesus, who is sanctity itself, not merely to see before Him all iniquities, past, present, and to come, but also to have to atone for them, to bear the shame and punishment due to them, as if He Himself had committed them. O Jesus, should not I also weep over all sins, over my own sins for which Thou didst weep?

Second Point.—Conducting afflictions. Watch over your temper, over your heart, consult your faith, which bids you see a blessing in adversity. You may consult a friend, but he should be a wise one. Depend very little upon human consolations. Go to God, rely on receiving peace from Him alone. Imitate Jesus Christ in His prayer. It was humble, devout, persevering. Put complete reliance on Providence.

MEDITATION LXXXII.

JESUS CHRIST GIVES HIMSELF UP TO HIS ENEMIES. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Recall to mind the history related by the Evangelists. The arrival of the cohort led by Judas: The question of the Saviour, "Whom seek ye?" the effect of those other words, "I am He"; Peter drawing the sword, Jesus healing the wound of Malchus; His words to St. Peter and to the armed men; the power He allows them to seize Him, and their use of this power.

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the entrance to the garden. It is night; only by the light of the torches can surrounding objects be distinguished. Place yourself in a spot whence you can see all that will take place.

Third Prelude.—Pray to Our Lord Jesus Christ to reveal to you His Sacred Heart, that you may study its feelings toward you, at the very moment that He gives Himself up to the rage of His enemies; beg of Him to enable you to derive many graces from all that you will see and hear.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Jesus Christ full of eagerness and determination. He has just prayed and resigned Himself to God's will, teaching us that prayer and resignation are the two great sources of Christian fortitude. His heart is burning with desire to die for us. Goodness, patience, a heavenly serenity appear on His countenance. Contemplate the apostles. Consider their timidity. They stand apart in the rear of the crowd. All their features indicate uneasiness. Soon, at sight of Judas, indignation is added to uneasiness of mind. Behold this traitor. Through that hypocritical exterior of respect and friendship, you can easily perceive the perfidy of the assassin. Learn from him to what excess one can be led by abuse of grace, and by neglecting to struggle against an evil passion. See the men armed with swords and clubs around Judas; their eyes betray wickedness, they wait for orders. Contemplate the awful crime of which they will soon be the instruments. How many the

favors, how great the means of salvation which the Saviour's mercy will offer them. Consider with sadness how hardened the heart of a man can become.

Second Point.—Hear the words. Let us consider those of the Saviour to St. Peter, and to the men that are about to lay sacrilegious hands on Him.

I. "Put up thy sword into the scabbard." For our defence Jesus permits us to use no weapons but those which our enemies will not employ against us, viz., meekness, patience, charity, prayer. To the use of these arms He promises victory. With these the Church established itself and will preserve its existence to the end of ages. If we make use of other means it will not recognize us for its ministers, neither will the Saviour recognize us as His representatives. If we wish to win the victory let us put the sword into its scabbard; let us govern our tongue, repress a too ardent desire to sustain our rights, to gain our cause; let us stifle resentment. If our sword has already inflicted a wound, let us hasten to heal it, repairing the harm already done by our submission and kind offices. "Thinkest thou that I can not ask My Father and He will give Me presently more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. xxv. 53.) Through love of us, O Jesus, Thou dost refuse the help Thou couldst obtain of Thy Father, of Thyself, of angels, of men, of heaven, and of earth. "How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled?" O Peter, you are angry because they have disgracefully loaded Me with chains like a criminal, but that very fact, which you think will tarnish My innocence and the glory of My death, will, on the contrary, bring out both in more glorious relief. The cruel ignominy predicted by the prophets becomes an evidence of My divinity. Because Thou art about to be reckoned "among the wicked" (Is. liii. 6) all the nations shall adore Thee as the only hope of the sinners. O Lord, how deeply is he to be pitied who does not suffer with Thee in this world! "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii. 11.) O Jesus, I take this lesson to myself, and apply it to all my contradictions, to all my sufferings, to this submission which I dislike, to this poverty, to this insult. Such is the chalice that I must drink, but it is offered to me by God, my Father; the Saviour drank it first, and next to Him all the apostles, all the good priests, all the elect.

II. "You are come out as it were to a robber, with swords and clubs to apprehend Me." (Matt. xxvi. 55.) Many murmurs and complaints are put to shame by these words. Men are sometimes heard to say: What do you take me to be? What did I do? Alas, if I were really a disciple of Jesus Christ I would not

complain of being like Him, I would accept every trial, every humiliation. I should rejoice to see myself treated as my Lord and Master was treated. "I sat daily with you, teaching in the Temple, and you laid not hands on Me." (Ibid.) It was as if He said: "Remember how useless against Me were all your evil designs as long as such was My will; how often were they foiled, though I was defenceless in the midst of you. Remember what passed a few days since, how loudly you cheered My arrival, with what eagerness you came to hear Me. If you wished to punish Me for the good I did to you, why did you not arrest Me in the Temple?" "This is your hour and the power of darkness." (Luke xxii. 54.) Your hour. Man then has his *hour,* and God has His eternity. A sad hour is the one in which the Saviour in His anger gives up the wicked to the perversity of his mode of life. A baneful power this, which we use in offending God and furthering the projects of hell, a frightful darkness, which hides from the sinner the sight of the abyss into which he is about to fall.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus steps forward. In His eagerness to die for us He throws Himself into the hands of His executioners. He stops them, so as to give them time to reflect. He asks them, though He knew it well, whom it was they sought, so that, having occasion to pronounce His name, that name connected with the remembrance of so many virtues and benefits, they might find therein a sudden, powerful light, showing to them the greatness of their crime. He prostrates them on the ground by answering, "I am He." How great must have been the wonder of Judas! How is it that he was not stricken with a sense of guilt, of horror, seeing that he and his cohorts were smitten, as it were, with a thunderbolt, at the sound of one word which expressed neither threats nor reproaches? How must the apostles have rejoiced, when they saw their enemies fall before them. How easily their Master had overpowered them! A faint image of what the just and the sinners will experience at the Last Day. To the first the Saviour will say: "I am He whom you loved, served, preferred before all. To the others He will declare I am He whom you despised, persecuted, and crucified. He commands now that His disciples go free. He is obeyed. Neither the fury of men nor of demons can injure those whom Jesus Christ protects. How good, therefore, it is to resign ourselves to His care. When He seems to forget Himself He does not forget us. Finally, after the miraculous healing of Malchus and His charitable warnings to His enemies, He removes the invisible barrier which stopped them from carrying out their fell designs, and they, regardless of the miracles of mercy which

they have just witnessed, with extreme blindness and implacable rage lay hands upon Him.

Represent to yourself with what fury those cruel wolves throw themselves upon the sweet Lamb, how violently they tighten the cords around His limbs, how they press upon and drag Him, how they make Him suffer all the indignities suggested by a pent-up rage which they can now freely satisfy. See how often they throw Him down, how inhumanly they drag Him along after He falls, how they strike Him and bid Him to rise. O Jesus, what a prelude to what Thou art about to endure for me! What shall I do to lighten the weight of Thy chains, to compensate Thee for the outrages inflicted on Thee? Those outrages of which I was the real cause? Oh, let at least Thy love of my soul, Thy love which delivered Thee into the hands of Thy enemies, regulate henceforward the sentiments of my heart; let it teach me to suffer joyfully all that I shall have to suffer for Thee.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Jesus Christ. He has just prayed, just resigned Himself to God's will. Prayer and resignation are the two sources of Christian fortitude. The apostles, timid, anxious, asleep while Jesus prayed. Judas—in appearance that of a hypocrite. Consider how far the abuse of grace can lead a man.

Second Point.—Hear the words of Jesus to Peter. "Put up thy sword into the scabbard." Our arms are patience and prayer. "Thinkest thou that I can not ask My Father?" It is My love for you which leads Me on to death.

What? "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" Words of Jesus to His enemies. "You are come out as it were to a robber, with swords and clubs to apprehend Me. I sat daily with you teaching in the Temple. This is your hour and the power of darkness." The sinner has his hour, God has His eternity. Awful darkness which hides from the sinner the sight of the abyss wherein he casts himself.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. In His desire to suffer for us, Jesus steps forward to meet His enemies. He stops them to give them time for reflection. In order to prove His might, He casts them down to the ground with a mere breath. He commands them to let His disciples go. He heals Malchus, wounded by St. Peter. Hardened indeed must they have been who resisted so many graces. See with what rage they throw themselves upon Him; imagine you behold all the indignities they inflict upon Him.

MEDITATION LXXXIII.

JESUS GIVES HIMSELF UP TO HIS ENEMIES.

1.—*For Us He Sacrifices His Liberty.*
2.—*For Him We Should Sacrifice Our Liberty.*

First Point.—For us Jesus sacrifices His liberty. Voluntarily, fully, forever.

I. A voluntary sacrifice. The Saviour had already carefully impressed people with the fact that no one could take away His life, that He had power to lay it down and power to take it up again. The spontaneousness of His immolation makes it singularly acceptable to His Father (John x. 17, 18), and is also well calculated to touch our hearts. He wishes us to know that His sufferings have no other cause than His love for us.

Before the appearance of His enemies He announces their coming, goes forward to meet them, prevents His disciples from opposing their designs, and heals by a miracle a wound inflicted in a fit of indignation. What need has He of the sword, to repel force by force? All heaven, if He so willed, would arm itself in His defence. He has no need of assistance who with a breath of His mouth casts that ruffianly band upon the ground. It would never have risen again had He not deigned to permit it to do so. How powerful His sway over events! He brings everything under subjection. The soldiers are powerless in His presence. They are obliged to hear what He wishes to say and to allow His companions to go unharmed. If, therefore He is taken captive it is because such is His desire. His own will, His own heart, deprive Him of liberty.

What would I do for a friend who suffered himself to be bound in chains for my sake? What would I demand of him whose chains I had carried in order to free him? O love, how great thy power, since thou canst reduce the Almighty to captivity! Subjugate me also, captivate me, so that nothing may separate me from Jesus, a captive for love of men.

II. The sacrifice was entire. It contained all those He would have to make through the course of His Passion, for in giving Himself up to His enemies, He foresaw to what extent they would abuse the power He gave them over His person. He saw Himself cast into a dungeon, insulted, outraged, ill-treated by the servants, the soldiers, the mob. He saw Himself bound fast to the column,

scourged, weltering in His blood, dying on the cross. In sacrificing His liberty, He sacrificed His honor and His life.

There were present to the eyes of His mind His many journeys through the streets of Jerusalem, surrounded with guards, bound with fetters like the lowest of malefactors, dragged from the house of Annas to that of Caiaphas, thence to the tribunal of Pilate, and to the palace of Herod. All these things He foresaw, but He obeyed the will of His Father. He yielded to the desire of suffering for us, notwithstanding all the efforts, notwithstanding all the torments He had to undergo.

O captivity of the Son of God, sorrowful and humiliating for Him, but a source of glory and comfort for His disciples! O blessed be those fetters, venerated be those chains! Great shall be the joy you will impart to the hearts of the apostles and of all apostolic men, when they will be persecuted and imprisoned for having preached the Gospel, for having labored to sustain the interests of Jesus. St. Paul never separates these two titles, Paul, apostle of Jesus Christ, and Paul, prisoner of Jesus Christ. To him the second title is as honorable as the first. He puts it forward as a fact which should commend him to the faithful. "I, therefore, a prisoner in the Lord (*vinctus*), beseech you." (Ep. iv. 1.) St. Francis Xavier is overjoyed in thinking that when entering China he will, perhaps, be loaded with chains and allowed to die in a dungeon.

III. The sacrifice Our Saviour made was lasting. He does not take back the liberty He has sacrificed for us. His love for us has made Him the captive of His cruel enemies; it will induce Him to submit to them till His death. Far from shielding Himself from their outrages and fury, He permits Himself to be stripped of His garments, scourged, crowned with thorns, fastened to the cross. He offers His hands and feet to be pierced with nails, and consummates His sacrifice by obedience, even unto death. Give me grace to understand, O my God, that the only way to advance in justice, and to be in Thy hands the instrument of Thy mercy for the salvation of souls, is to allow myself to be guided in all things by Thy spirit—"Being bound in the spirit, I go to Jerusalem" (Acts xx. 22); that I must walk in the path of a holy and humble dependence, and sacrifice to Thee my liberty, as Thou didst sacrifice Thy liberty for me.

Second Point.—Jesus Christ asks the sacrifice of our liberty. The priesthood can be called a noble servitude. No man is less his master than the priest; he belongs to the Church, to souls, to all souls, but particularly to those entrusted to his care; he belongs to sinners to procure their conversion, to the just to guide them.

He owes his time, his solicitude, his patience, his life to all; all have a right to claim his services. He is the servant of the servants of Jesus Christ.

Every Christian when he receives baptism sacrifices his liberty to Jesus Christ, but the priest binds himself much more strictly to Him when he gives himself to Him to be His minister, and when, in the discharge of his duties, he allows himself to be guided by the motive of charity, having no other desire in all labors and sufferings but to please his Master; then he is in reality, and in the most excellent manner, the prisoner of Jesus Christ. He goes no more whither his will leads him; the Spirit of God is now his guide. "When thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself; but when thou shalt be old"—that is, from the day thou didst consecrate thyself to the Lord—"another shall gird thee, and lead thee whither thou wouldst not."

Thou dost demand of me, O Jesus, the sacrifice of my liberty, and it is Thy wish that it be voluntary, entire, and unalterable as was Thine. Thou offerest to me Thy chains, that I may carry them with Thee. Thy love for me raises me above nature. It is hard to be dependent, never to belong to one's self—but how sweet it is to the heart that loves Thee to bear this subjection with Thee and for Thee. Bonds and fetters Thou offerest to me. But, on the other hand, Thou dost deliver me from a very sad lot. If I were not Thy slave, I would be the slave of my passions. Blessed be Thou, O my God. Thou hast broken my chains. I am willing to carry Thine. I am Thine, I will always remain Thine. Grant me this grace, give this joy to Thy servant. "Give joy to the soul of Thy servant, for to Thee, O Lord, I have lifted up my soul." (Ps. lxxxv. 4.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—For us Jesus sacrifices His liberty. His sacrifice was voluntary; this He proved. His own will made Him a captive. His sacrifice was entire. It contained in itself all the others He was to make during His Passion. In sacrificing His liberty He sacrificed His honor and His life. He accepted all the outrages, all the torments which He foresaw. O sacred bonds, O chains of love, what joy you bring to the hearts of His disciples when they in their turn are persecuted. His sacrifice was lasting. Grant me grace, O my God, to be guided by Thy Spirit, and always to walk in the path of humble dependence.

Second Point.—Jesus Christ demands of us the same sacrifice. The priest does not belong to himself; any ordinary Christian

belongs more to himself than the priest. To God and to souls he owes all—his time, his life, the use of all his faculties; and when in all that he does or suffers, he has no other desire but to please and obey a Master whom he loves, then he is most conspicuously the prisoner of Jesus Christ. Thou dost offer me bonds and chains to wear, O my God, but how heavy the chains from which Thou dost relieve me. If I were not Thy slave, I should be the slave of my passions. My chains Thou hast broken, now I wish to carry Thine.

MEDITATION LXXXIV.

JESUS CHRIST SACRIFICES HIS REPUTATION FOR LOVE OF US.

Of all sacrifices, the one we are most unwilling to make is the sacrifice of our reputation. This desire of being esteemed by men is an abundant source of trouble and of sin. We would not like to displease God, but still we have a desire to please the world. This vanity can only be overcome by considering the example of Jesus Christ in His Passion.

1.—*What Sort of a Reputation Does Jesus Christ Sacrifice for Us?*

2.—*Extent of this Sacrifice.*

3.—*His Resignation in Making this Sacrifice.*

First Prelude.—Recall to mind the calumnies and reproaches by which His enemies endeavored to dishonor the Son of God; remember His silence, His patience, at a time when everything seemed to demand that He should both speak and act.

Second Prelude.—Extinguish in me, O my Saviour, all inordinate love of the world's opinion; teach me to prize the esteem of the world as little as Thou, and, like Thee, to covet the honor of its contempt.

First Point.—What sort of a reputation does Jesus Christ sacrifice for us? Never had any man enjoyed before Him a reputation more brilliant, more universal, a reputation which could so easily have been maintained.

I. He enjoyed a brilliant reputation. His praise was on every tongue. Admiration followed Him everywhere. Think of His wisdom! He was only twelve years of age when the doctors of Jerusalem showed astonishment at His wisdom and His answers. Consider how often in after years He humbled the pride of the doctors of the law. Consider His power. The sea and the winds,

the heaven, the earth, health and sickness, life and death, all obeyed His voice. How wonderful His knowledge, the penetration of His mind. He had often showed that He knew the most secret thoughts, that He penetrated the recesses of hearts. "Lord, I see that Thou art a prophet." "Come and see a man who told me all that I have done." (Joan. iv. 29.) Consider His innocence, His sanctity. "Which of you shall convince Me of sin?" To this challenge, His enemies, the well-known Pharisees, had given no answer save to accuse Him of visiting sinners and eating with them. To Him they refer their matters of dispute for arbitration. They loudly proclaim that He teaches the way of God in truth. They acknowledge him to be the Messias, or, at least, a prophet sent by the Lord, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord." (Matt. xxi. 9.)

II. The reputation which He enjoyed was universal. He was known, esteemed, and revered everywhere. In Jerusalem, where they had seen the man born blind suddenly cured, and the paralytic of thirty-eight years enabled to walk. In Judea, where all the cities, the villages and highways re-echoed the glory of His name. In Galilee, where He had raised to life the son of the widow of Naim, appeased storms, caused the miraculous draughts of fishes. In Samaria, where, after believing in Him on the word of a woman, they afterward declared: "We believe in Him now, because we have seen and heard Him ourselves." In the provinces of Tyre and Sidon, whence the sick came to Him seeking a remedy to their ills, and returned home healed.

III. His reputation was grounded upon a life of virtue, upon works heretofore unheard of, upon the oracles of the prophets, which they saw perfectly accomplished in His person, upon countless and unquestionable prodigies; the dead raised to life in sight of the multitude, and one of those at the very gates of Jerusalem. It was grounded upon benefits loudly proclaimed by the very persons who had received them. One declared: I was blind, and He restored to me my sight; my son was dead and He raised him up. Others said: I was in a ship on the sea and He saved me from shipwreck; while many others related: I ate of the bread which He multiplied in the desert.

IV. He could have easily kept His reputation unsullied. Many reasons seemed to demand that He should do so. Had he opened His lips to defend Himself when invited to do so by the governors He would not have needed His divine eloquence to defeat His enemies, to turn public indignation against them. The testimony of the witnesses did not agree and evidently destroyed their case; the falsity of the accusations was evident to all, and the hypocrisy

and malice of His accusers were apparent to all; of His innocence Pilate himself was convinced; Herod was favorable to Him; the people would have rendered to Him the affection they always had for Him.

It seemed, too, that He should have destroyed the evil impressions caused by so many detestable imputations. Were He to die loaded with infamy, what would become of His heavenly doctrine, of His divine mission, of the work of regeneration already commenced? There never were, it seems, so many motives to oblige a man to justify himself, and yet Jesus is silent. Such was the remedy needed to cure the blindness which prevents us from understanding the nothingness of creatures, the vanity of their censures and of their praises. Shall not I, O my God, after this example, understand that Thou alone art He whose praise I should seek, whose censure I should fear?

Second Point.—Extent of the sacrifice of His reputation. It is complete, universal, and, if such a thing were possible, well calculated to bring upon Christ irretrievable dishonor.

I. His disgrace is complete. What has become of His wisdom? He has no word to say in self-defence. Men consider Him a fool. With His arrest His power seems to have disappeared. He seems powerless against His enemies. His knowledge, His penetration of mind, seem to have vanished; they blindfold Him, tell Him to guess who struck Him, and by His silence He appears to acknowledge His lack of knowledge. What has become of His virtue and sanctity? He is condemned like a knave, one guilty of all crimes, equally repulsive to God and men.

II. His disgrace extends everywhere. In the very city of Jerusalem He is condemned, dragged to execution like the worst of malefactors at the very time of Easter, that is, of the most solemn feast of the year, in presence of a vast multitude made up of men from every nation. The then known world is, as it were, the witness of His disgrace, of the triumph of His enemies, of His infamous death.

III. His disgrace is most damaging to His reputation. It would have suffered but little had He had no other enemies but the scribes and the Pharisees, for their insane jealousy was well known. Consider, however, that He is condemned at all the tribunals; at the tribunal of the doctors of the law, who declare that His doctrine is full of iniquity and blasphemy; at the tribunal of the high priest and priests, who pronounce Him to be an enemy of the Mosaic law and of religion; at the tribunal of the king, who pretends that this so-called wise man is merely a fanatic. He is condemned at the tribunal of the Roman governor, and as this

officer had sought many pretexts to release Him, men might well believe that he was forced by evidence to pass sentence against Him. He is condemned at the tribunal of the people, who seem to withdraw their recent applause and greeting, and to be more intent and unanimous in asking for His death than they had been in giving Him an ovation.

Finally, He is condemned, in a certain sense, at the very tribunal of His disciples, for these by betraying, denying, and forsaking Him, seem to acknowledge that He was guilty of some, at least, of the crimes imputed to Him. How can I, O my God, wish to be esteemed by a world which has despised Thee to such an extent, and of which Thou seekest nothing but contempt? Humble my pride, O my God. To displease the world I am satisfied, provided only I can please Thee. "If I yet pleased men I should not be the servant of Christ." (Gal. i. 10.)

Third Point.—Calmness of the soul of Jesus Christ while making the sacrifice of His reputation. When we think of what He is, of the adoration He deserves, of the outrages wherewith He is loaded, we are astonished to see that all creatures do not rise to avenge His honor; we would wish, at least, that before dying He would manifest His innocence to the whole universe. But He forgives, He remains silent. He can do everything, and yet He seems to do nothing, regardless of the motives which seem to demand of Him that He should speak; He has become as a man who "heareth not and that hath no reproofs in His mouth." (Ps. xxxvi. 15.) O adorable silence! How well thou dost condemn our complaints and outbursts of anger, wherever our reputation is attacked in the least. Is my reputation as deserved, does it extend as far, was it as shamefully destroyed as the reputation of the Saviour? What is the cause of this self-esteem among men? A word which escapes, a conversation which will not be remembered, or, at the most, a little regard withdrawn by a small number of persons. For a thing so insignificant shall I lose the quiet of my soul? A great reputation is always a great burden and often a great danger.

O Lord, "I will humble myself more than I have done, and I will be little in my own eyes." (2 Kings, vi. 22.) Grant me to love, to be unknown to the world, and accounted as nothing, for "I have chosen to be one abject in the house of my God." (Ps. lxxxiii. 11.) "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and a door around about my lips. Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins." (Ps. cxl. 3, 4.) Following Thy example and that of Thy saints, I will keep silent whenever I am attacked by insults or calumny.

In preparing yourself for Mass, and in your thanksgiving, offer to Jesus Christ sacrifice for sacrifice. Beg of Him to dispose of your person and your reputation for His glory, your sanctification and the salvation of souls.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—What reputation does Jesus Christ sacrifice for us? It was a brilliant reputation. Consider His wisdom at the age of twelve, and in later life His conduct toward His persecutors. Consider His power, His vast intelligence, His innocent life. He enjoyed a universal esteem in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Galilee, in Samaria, in the provinces of Tyre and Sidon; an esteem justly acquired by a life of sanctity and of miracles, by blessings proclaimed by those who had received them. He could have preserved it easily, and many motives seemed to demand its maintenance. O my God, I at last understand that Thou alone art He whose esteem I should crave, and whose censure I should dread.

Second Point.—Extent of the sacrifice of His reputation. He has lost it all. His wisdom, His power, His penetration of mind, His virtue. It has been destroyed everywhere. The then known world is in a manner the witness of His ignominies, of the triumph of His enemies. He is condemned at all the tribunals, at the tribunal of the doctors of the law, of the high priest, of Pilate, of Herod, and of the whole people, and even in a certain sense at the tribunal of His own disciples.

Third Point.—Calmness of the soul of Jesus in this ordeal. Who was He? Why did not every creature arise to revenge Him? Why did He not show forth His innocence before the world? He forgives. He remains silent. O admirable silence! How well it condemns our murmurs and complaints whenever our honor is the least attacked.

MEDITATION LXXXV.

JESUS CHRIST IN THE HOUSE OF CAIAPHAS. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Jesus is questioned by the high priest, and after His answer He receives a blow. Being questioned anew in the name of the living God, and urged to say if He be really the Son of God, He avers that He is, and declares that they who now judge Him will one day be judged by Him. The high priest rends His garments, all unite with him in proclaiming Christ worthy of death, and surrender Him to the brutality of the servants for the rest of the night. (John, xviii.; Mark, xiv.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the council hall, in which all the chief priests, and a great number of scribes and Pharisees are assembled. Place yourself in a spot whence you can see and hear everything.

Third Prelude.—Beg pardon of Jesus Christ for all the outrages He suffered for you during His Passion, and particularly during that horrible night which He spent in the house of Caiaphas. Then beg of God to bestow upon you a love for the world's contempt, or at least the ability to suffer, through love of Him, all the annoyances which He suffered through love of you.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Those judges, those lawyers assembled in great haste for the trial, not one official is missing. The high priest, arrayed in his robes of office, is sitting on his throne, scrupulously careful about the maintenance of his dignity. Remark how all his movements, his very countenance, betray hypocrisy, impatience, and pride, which are patent to all. The chief priests, the scribes, all the officers of justice occupy their places with complacency. An ill-concealed joy pervades the whole assembly; an air of brutal satisfaction is visible on all countenances, when the illustrious captive is introduced, bound like a criminal and surrounded by soldiers. See Jesus Christ, the Holy of holies, led to the bench of the accused. He is securely bound; every precaution is taken against His escape, as if He were a dangerous criminal who had caused consternation

in the country during many years. He, however, looks as meek as a lamb. His bearing is noble and modest, all His features indicate the perfect tranquillity of His soul. Servants and soldiers stare at Him impudently; there are false witnesses who carefully study the infamous part they are to play. Under those different physiognomies we discover souls blackened with crimes, tormented by the most violent passions, goaded on by all the hatred of hell. What a contrast to the soul of Jesus Christ, so pure, so calm, so full of charity!

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the facts. The high priest questions Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. He had preached publicly during three years, and although many attempts had been made to entrap Him in His words, they had never succeeded, and had been forced to admire His doctrine, against which no complaint had been made. Jesus answers: "I have spoken openly to the world, and in secret I have spoken nothing. Ask them who have heard what I have spoken unto them." (John, xviii. 19, 20, 21.) He who is wisdom itself could not speak more judiciously. The answer remains without a reply, but a brutal servant, wishing to gratify the judges, gives Him a blow, pretending to teach Him a lesson. "Answerest Thou the high priest so?"

And the face so ill-treated is the adorable face, the sight of which shall be the eternal felicity of the saints in heaven! When we remember that He is the Almighty, the King of kings, the supreme Judge of the living and the dead; when we think of him who inflicted the insult, of the place where it was given, of its motive of the deed, we feel inclined to ask, why was not that sacrilegious hand withered on the spot? Why was not the wretch struck dead instantly? O Jesus, Thou bearest this ignominious treatment to atone for our pride, to hush our complaints when we are wounded, and in order that Thy ministers, following Thy example, may bear affronts, and continue as Thou didst, through humiliations, the work of man's salvation. Our Lord would have suffered in silence the infamous treatment inflicted by the servants of the high priest had it not been accompanied with an accusation which it was necessary to refute.

"If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil, but if well, why strikest thou Me?" (Ibid.) This answer Our Saviour owed to Himself. Neither in the minds of His judges, nor in the history of His Passion, should there remain a suspicion that He had spoken impudently. By this answer he instructed us; we needed to be taught by Him that a mild and measured answer does not interfere with the merit of patience, that we must respect the authority

vested in us and prove to others our respect for it. Again, this answer was necessary to baffle His enemies, by contrasting His innocence, His meekness and charity with the hatred, injustice, and violence of those who condemned Him.

Many witnesses come forward and can not agree in their testimony. The impatient high priest rises and says: "Answerest Thou nothing to the things that are laid to Thy charge by these men?" (Mark, xix. 60.) But "He answered nothing." How eloquent this silence is. It shall cost Thee Thy life, O Jesus, if Thou wilt not speak, and Thou sayest not a word. After a while they will avail themselves of Thy answer to find a reason for Thy condemnation, and yet nothing will deter Thee from proclaiming the truth, for in everything Thou art considering the glory of Thy father and Thy infinite love for man. Thou art now atoning for our false justification of ourselves, and for the real crimes which we have committed. Why, then, shouldst Thou endeavor to justify Thyself? Thou knowest, moreover, how triumphantly Thou shalt be justified one day. Ah, how little I should dread the condemnation of men if I but remember that injustice, if suffered with patience, will be a source of glory and joy at Thy tribunal.

And "the high priest said to Him, I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." (Matt. xxv. 63.)

O my soul, be thou attentive, listen respectfully to the reply of the King of martyrs, who has testified to His divinity and sealed His testimony with His blood. "I am, and you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God and coming with the clouds of heaven." Consider the majesty contained in those words. They should be carefully studied in holy meditation. "I speak, since you use the august name of My Father to command Me. I speak, and say to you more than you would like to hear; I, like a lamb did not open My mouth, but I shall now speak in the tones of a lion. Do not confound the two advents of the Messias. The prophets who announced the humiliations of the first, announced also the glory of the second. You now triumph. Wait, however. The day shall come, when you shall behold the same Son of man whom you have judged, sitting at the right hand of His Father, and coming in the clouds to judge all men."

O Jesus, I adore Thee as the true Son of God, living eternally. Thou art my Master, my Saviour. Accept the homage of a heart which is all Thine, but alas! how dearly has that heart of mine been bought! What will be the result of a declaration which causes these sacrilegious judges to tremble? Thou hast hardly uttered

it, when Caiaphas, "rending his garments saying, what further need have we of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy, what think you?" They all condemned Him to be "guilty of death." Ah, Jesus does really deserve death, for He has taken upon Himself the debt of all sinners. He shall die to deliver me from eternal death; can I do any less than to live for Him?

The judges withdraw. None remain in the hall save the Saviour surrounded by soldiers and menials who look at Him tauntingly, and ill-treat Him in a thousand different ways.

Represent to yourself a king who has been made prisoner given up by his conqueror to the fury of a vile mob with no other recommendation but this: Do not kill him, I want him to die in great tortures. Our Lord was treated as this unfortunate king would have been. The house of Caiaphas, says St. John Chrysostom, was as another hell. Each of those who dwelt there was a torturer, and each torturer a demon in human shape. "Then did they spit in His face, and the men that held Him mocked Him, and struck Him, and they blindfolded Him, and smote His face, and they asked Him saying, prophesy, who is it that struck Thee, and blaspheming, many other things they said against Him." (Luke, xxii. 63 et seq.) Between the soldiers and the servants there seemed a satanic rivalry to know which would insult and torment Him the more cruelly. His patience irritates them, His meekness increases their rage. And all this will last till morning.

What wilt thou do, O Priest, to express to Jesus Christ thy grief for all His sufferings, and to manifest to Him the extent of thy sorrow for having helped to prepare for Him such a cup of anguish? Adore Him, love Him, neglect no means to procure for Him all the homage which He deserves. Respect Him thyself, and labor to procure respect for this God Saviour, a respect which will be manifested to His holy name, to His representative, and especially to the adorable Sacrament of the Eucharist. Jesus is near thee under the sacramental veils. Here, also, He continues to be insulted. In the tabernacle of Thy church thou hast this divine heart which loved me so much, whose tender charity toward us is the same now as it was during His mortal life. To-day, as of yore, He asks of thee to love and to imitate Him. If, through zeal in the defence of His interests, we bring down annoyance and even contempt upon ourselves, should we not consider these great blessings and glory? Especially when we remember that He preferred humiliation and outrage to the glory that was due to Him.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Consider the persons concerned. Those judges, those lawyers, assembled in haste in the court. The high priest, his haughty, conceited appearance. The chief priests, the scribes. An air of brutal satisfaction is noticeable on all those countenances. Jesus, the Son of God, at the bench of the accused, bound like a criminal. Everything about Him breathes meekness and innocence.

Second and Third Points. "Hear the words, consider the facts." The high priest questions Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine. For an answer full of wisdom He receives a blow. Who is He who is so outraged? In what place is the affront inflicted, by whom, and why? How is it that the sacrilegious hand was not withered instantly? "If I have spoken evil, give testimony of the evil." For His justification, for our instruction, and for the confusion of His enemies Our Lord was bound to give this reply. They multiply accusations against Him. He will not break His silence until adjured in the name of the living God, to declare if He be His Son. "I am, and you shall see the Son of man, sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming with the clouds of heaven." Caiaphas rends his garments. "He has blasphemed, he is guilty of death." All applaud the sentence. What wilt thou do, O my soul, to express to Jesus how deeply thou feelest all His sufferings for thee, and how repentant thou art for being the cause of so many outrages against Him?

MEDITATION LXXXVI.

JESUS CHRIST AT THE COURT OF HEROD. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Herod was quite pleased when he saw Jesus, for he had desired it for a long time, having heard many things about Him, and hoping also that he would see Him perform some miracle. He therefore asked Him many questions, to which Jesus Christ gave no answer. In the meantime the princes of the priests and the scribes multiplied accusations against Him. "But Herod and his army set Him at naught and mocked Him,

putting on Him a white garment, and sent Him back to Pilate." (Luke, xxiii. 8.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the streets of Jerusalem; next the palace of Herod, the hall into which Our Saviour is brought. Here everything is sumptuous; it is the house of comfort, of pleasure and vanity.

Third Prelude.—Pray to God to discover to us the folly of human wisdom, to fill us with contempt for the world and all that which it esteems, and on the other hand to instil into our hearts a love and desire for that which Our Saviour loved and desired.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. Herod on his throne surrounded with his courtiers, a cunning, unscrupulous prince, full of vanity, wavering between religion and incredulity. He manifests pleasure and curiosity at the sight of Jesus. He had long wished to see Him—not to receive instruction from One whom many already thought to be the Messias, but to test His power and wisdom. He hopes that his curiosity will be satisfied. His pride has nothing more to wish for—he holds in his hands the destiny of this Jesus, whose renown is so great in Israel. Around the king a multitude of officers, of guards, servants, and courtiers. They are frivolous and shallow-minded men, well versed in the ways of the world, ever ready to flatter the passions of their master, whose only religion is amusement. Near Our Lord are the men who brought Him, the princes of the people and the scribes who have come to sustain their accusation; they dread the result of a new trial before a judge who is favorable to the accused, and who also, being acquainted with the prophecies, might be convinced by Jesus if He chose to justify Himself. Above all, contemplate the adorable Saviour, who challenges no jurisdiction, who wishes to be humiliated and condemned for the welfare of His followers, toward whom the world will be as unjust as it is now toward Himself. How does He appear in presence of this court? He is still bound like a criminal. His countenance betrays meekness and suffering, but no trouble, no anxiety. Far above all that your eyes can behold, consider God the Father and all the angels looking attentively on a spectacle which interests heaven as well as earth. Lose nothing of what is going to pass.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words, consider the actions. Herod questions Jesus in many words (Luke, xxiii. 9), probably concerning His person, His mission, His doctrine, His miracles, and shows a desire to see Him perform some miracle. He desires to sound Him, to become fully acquainted with His character, so as to be able to render an opinion which will do

credit to his supposed wisdom. "But He answers him nothing." The less Jesus answered, the more urgent was Herod in his questioning. All in vain. Jesus did not even give him the reason of His refusal to answer him. He was satisfied with punishing the arrogant presumption of Herod by His silence. Contemplate at length the eternal, incarnate Wisdom, in presence of human wisdom.

The meekness and calmness of Jesus Christ under such treatment and insults are miracles in themselves. His noble indifference to everything that men held most dear ought to have opened the eyes of the most prejudiced. One must have been more than mortal to look with philosophic resignation upon those things which generally fire the passions and ambition of men. Herod can not fathom this. The more he studies Jesus from his pagan standpoint the less he understands Him, the deeper he sinks into mental darkness. "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise." According to his judgment, that divine silence is stupidity, that patience is want of feeling, that inaction weakness and incapacity. He decides that Jesus is a fool. "Herod and his army set Him at naught and mocked Him, putting on Him a white garment."

Consider how many insults and humiliations are suggested by the words: "Set Him at naught and mocked Him." Who can tell the humiliations invented by this arrogant monarch against the person of Jesus Christ, because he could obtain from Him neither a miracle nor an answer? How happy he thought the idea of putting a white garment on Jesus, dishonoring Him before the eyes of his own court, and of all the people. The Saviour allows Himself to be clothed with the garment of ignominy to encourage us to suffer for Him, and teach us to despise the contempt of the world. With his army; it was in presence of a numerous cortège, that Herod had propounded to Jesus Christ those captious questions. They had been deceived in their expectation. When they saw him mocking Jesus Christ, they hastened to follow his example. They applaud the sagacity of his judgment, admire his decision; the verdict is that a fool instead of a criminal was brought before the court. They divert themselves at His expense. Hear the jeers, the hootings, the bursts of laughter with which they deride the pretended Messias. "And sent Him back to Pilate." Outside the palace the people wait to see the result of the affair. What passed through their minds when Jesus appeared in the humiliating state described by the Gospel, clothed in a white garment? Some, indeed, had continued to hold Him in esteem, but what is their opinion of Him now? That *white robe* tells what the prince and the grandees of the kingdom think

of Him. "Contemplate your God during this passage from the palace of Herod to the pretorium. He walks with downcast eyes; He hears the hootings, the insults, the sarcasms, is probably pelted with the mud and the filth from the streets." (St. Bonav.)

In the depth of that debasement under which He conceals His divinity, adore Jesus Christ with the angels, O my soul! Thou openest my eyes, O my Saviour. To be wise before Thee, one has to be considered a fool by the world. I looked for wisdom and said: Where is it? Ah! it is not with those who live in delights; the sensuous and voluptuous world can not know it. Neither is it to be found in the possession of great learning. I see it hidden under that robe of ignominy. I shall hide myself under it; under it I shall study Thy lessons, O eternal Truth, and I shall exclaim: Blessed are they whom the world despises!

Resolution.—In everything strive against the maxims of the world. In matters of honor and contempt adopt the reverse of the judgments of the world. *Aut mundus errat, aut Christus fallitur.* (St. Bern.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons mentioned. Herod on his throne. He desired to see Jesus, not to receive instruction from Him, but to make trial of His wisdom. Around the king a multitude of courtiers and officers. About Jesus not a friend, only guards and accusers. Contemplate especially the adorable Saviour, who wishes to pass through humiliation and even condemnation. His face indicates suffering, but no trouble or anxiety. See, above the objects which strike your senses, Almighty God and all the angels beholding attentively a spectacle which interests heaven as well as earth.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words, consider the actions. Herod asks many questions of Jesus. He wishes to sound Him, to become acquainted with His character; but Jesus is silent. Divine wisdom is in the presence of human wisdom, which it baffles and confounds. Herod declares Jesus to be a fool, and gives Him up to be derided by the mob and by his court. He sends Him back to Pilate. Behold your God; He walks on with downcast eyes. Adore Him, concealing His divinity under the depth of debasement. Do not be governed by the so-called wisdom of the world.

MEDITATION LXXXVII.

JESUS CHRIST AT THE TRIBUNAL OF PILATE COMPARED WITH BARABBAS. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—Pilate, having called together the chief priests, the magistrates, and the people, said to them: You have brought to me this man, accusing Him of perverting the people. I examined Him before you and found in Him no cause of condemnation. Herod concurred in my judgment. It is a custom amongst you that on the Paschal festival I should release for you a prisoner. Which of the two do you wish that I deliver unto you, either Barabbas or Jesus, who is named the Christ? They all cried out, Away with this one, give us Barabbas! Pilate spoke to them a second time and said: What will you then that I do to Jesus, who is named the Christ? . . .They all again cried out, Crucify Him! Crucify Him! (Luke, xxiii. 13; Matt. xxvii. 17.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the pretorium; in front of it a large courtyard in which the people are assembled.

Third Prelude.—Pray to Jesus Christ to give you an intimate knowledge of His divine Heart, and especially to increase within you the love and esteem of abjection.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Contemplate Pilate sitting on his tribunal, in a large room inside the pretorium; he comes out in front of the building to address the people. He is in doubt and anxiety, completely taken up with one thought. You might read on his countenance the terrible struggle of his heart. He fears the adverse judgment of the world. Behold the accusers of Jesus Christ, chief priests, scribes, Pharisees, their aspect sullen and cruel. They cherish their dark project, their hatred is not the result of impulse but of reflection. Consider the people. Curiosity, idleness, the desire to witness something out of the ordinary, had brought them hither in great numbers. One can foresee that they will believe all they shall be told without examination; they are to commit the greatest of crimes. Barabbas is in his dungeon, waiting for the death he has so well deserved. Look at the wickedness of his countenance. How repulsive it is.

You must fix, however, your attention on Jesus Christ; contemplate Him with feelings arising from the heart more than from the eyes. We perceive in Him the same meekness, the same modest serenity, the same calmness; we notice in Him the same ardent desire to suffer for our sake, that we may walk along the way opened for us by His example.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. Consider Pilate's weakness in sending Jesus Christ to Herod. Pilate was already guilty of a grievous misdemeanor. However, he can still repair his mistakes. By his authority he can spare the life of Christ, whose innocence he and Herod have been forced to acknowledge. "You have brought this man before me, as guilty of exciting the people to rebel. I have questioned Him before you, and I have not found Him guilty of any of the crimes of which you accuse Him. Such also is the judgment of Herod concerning Him, for I sent you to him, and he has not treated Him as a man guilty of death. You pretend that in Galilee He began to pervert the people; but who can know this better than Herod, king of Galilee. You pretend that He continues to excite the people to revolt in Judea and even in Jerusalem; but who knows better than myself what is passing here? To the sentence you ask me to give, I oppose the judgment of the prince. You want me to condemn to death a man whom he finds innocent. I know that Herod mocked the prisoner; but can you not easily understand that by his mockery Herod treated your accusation as ridiculous? His pretended state crimes, of which you make so much ado, seemed to the prince but a piece of folly. I shall, therefore, chastise Him and send Him away."

This is certainly a strange conclusion. Who could have expected it? He is innocent, the accusations brought against Him are false, and yet He is to be chastised. Pilate's judgment urges him to punish the accusers and to acquit the prisoner; but, because of public opinion, he punishes Him whose virtue he can not but admire. O sweetest Jesus, by this incident Thou dost wish to show Thyself a comforter of the afflicted and oppressed, especially of Thy ministers pursued by hatred and calumny.

This first concession emboldens the enemies of the Saviour. They understand clearly the weakness of the judge. To rid himself of all responsibility he resorts to another stratagem. "It is a custom that during the Paschal festival, I should deliver a prisoner for you. Which do you wish that I deliver to you, either Barabbas or Jesus, who is called the Christ?" The more odious the comparison the better it answers the purpose of Pilate. "Which of the two will you that I deliver?" Which of the two?

You can have your choice. The one preferred by you shall receive his liberty; the other shall undergo the punishment of death; but take time to consider, consult the dictates of justice and your own interests.

While waiting for an answer, his wife sends Pilate this message: "Have thou nothing to do with that just man, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him." How many were the efforts of Thy grace, O my God, to save this sinner standing on the brink of the abyss; but who can stay him? A murmur runs through the crowd. Satan, using the scribes and Pharisees as his mouthpiece, fills the people with his own unnatural instincts. This awful shout is heard. "Away with this one; release unto us Barabbas." It is not a timid utterance; it is a piercing cry, it is the voice of fury. It arises from no one individual; it is the voice of the assembled people. It seems unanimous. "The whole multitude together cried out saying: Away with this man and release unto us Barabbas." What energy in this expression of hatred, away with this man! They will not even name Him. Put Him away, let Him live no longer, let Him perish. What were Thy sentiments, O Saviour, toward this ungrateful people, whom Thou hadst so tenderly loved, on whom Thou hadst lavished so many blessings? Sentiments of compassion, sentiments of ardent charity; they were the sentiments Thou didst inspire in the martyrs, when, like Thee and for love of Thee, they saw themselves the object of public hatred and fury; they were the sentiments Thou dost still impart to Thy good priests, when, exposing themselves for Thy glory to the hatred of the world, they hear raging against them the voice of human passions.

Pilate is surprised and grieved. He insists: "What then will you that I do to the King of the Jews? Crucify Him! Crucify Him! But what evil has He done?" Oh, rather, what is the good that He did not do? O Priest of God, do not depend upon men; do not depend upon the services you have rendered them. Hope for nothing from their gratitude, yet let not their ingratitude prevent you from making sacrifices for their salvation. To all the pleadings of Pilate one answer only is made: "Crucify Him! Let Him be crucified!" At last, then, the end is accomplished; the end so desired by the enemies of the Saviour, so clearly announced by the prophets, so often predicted by Himself. In vain Pilate resorts to expedients; the decree has been pronounced in heaven and on earth, and it will be executed. And now consider that if Jesus is condemned to crucifixion, His disciples and representatives should also be prepared to undergo suffering. "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices

and concupiscences." (Gal. v. 24.) Otherwise they can not expect to be like their model.

For me, therefore, it remains to pronounce this word of salvation: Let Him be crucified! My body complains and shrinks from labor, asks for rest. Let it be crucified! My flesh is rebelling, concupiscence allures me, vices desire to have full sway. Let all those be crucified! There arises in my heart a feeling of pride, of antipathy, of revenge. Let it be crucified!

Pilate washes his hands, saying: "I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it." (Matt. xxvii. 24.) Yet it was the duty of this governor to protect innocence, to punish crime. How miserably he exercises this duty. It is a perversion of justice to acknowledge a man's innocence and yet to refuse to defend it. "The people answering said: His blood be upon us and upon our children." (Ib.) A frenzy seems to take hold of them. A pagan judge is worried, even grieved at Christ's condemnation to death. And the Jews, adorers of the true God, in order to wring this unjust condemnation from Pilate, are willing to accept its responsibility, to allow all woe to fall upon their heads, curses to fall upon their children.

Consider how painful it was to the Saviour to see such implacable rage in His enemies, such unabated hatred in a people whom He loved so much. Another sorrow was the degradation of Pilate, and the sentence of reprobation which the Jews pronounced against themselves. Compassionate Him in His distress; manifest to Him your gratitude. Pray that His blood may bring down abundant blessings upon you and upon all the souls intrusted to you. May it drop upon the most hardened hearts to soften them, upon the foulest criminals to cleanse them, upon all men to save them.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons mentioned. Pilate now sitting in judgment, now appearing before the people. He is in anxiety and doubt, a prey to fear of human respect. The accusers of Jesus Christ; their sinister appearance. The people, their fickleness. Barabbas in his dungeon. Bestow all your attention on the Saviour. In Him there is still the same remarkable serenity, the same desire to suffer for us.

Second and Third Points.—Hear the words and consider the actions. Consider Pilate's conduct. He can still repair the harm that has been done. In the beginning he assumes the defence of Jesus. He questions Him before the people, and finds Him guiltless of crime. Herod's judgment had coincided with his own.

He will have Him chastised, and then he will send Him away. A strange conclusion. Although innocent, He is to be chastised Every kindness is shown to the wicked, every severity to Him whose innocence has been acknowledged and declared. Such is the conduct of the world toward Jesus, and toward His disciples. Pilate makes use of another expedient: "Which of the two will you that I deliver to you, Barabbas or Jesus?" All exclaim together: "Away with this one, release unto us Barabbas!" Pilate insists: "What then will you that I do to the King of the Jews?" "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" "But what evil has He done?" To all these protests of the governor there is only one answer: "Crucify Him!" Pilate washes his hands, and the people assume the responsibility of shedding divine blood. Consider Jesus, who feels so keenly the injustice done to Him. Beg that His blood may flow down upon you in the form of abundant benedictions.

MEDITATION LXXXVIII.

JESUS CHRIST AT THE PILLAR. APPLICATION OF THE SENSES.

1.—*Application of the Sight.*
2.—*Application of the Hearing.*
3.—*Application of the Smell.*
4.—*Application of the Taste.*
5.—*Application of the Touch.*

First Prelude.—"Then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him." (John, xix. 1.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the hall destined for this punishment, the pillar to which Jesus is soon to be tied. Everything is ready for a torture as degrading as it is cruel.

Third Prelude.—It is now, O my Saviour, that, forgetting myself and everything else, I must banish all feeling from my heart, except that of tender compassion and of sincere gratitude. Kindle within me a little of the heavenly fire which consumed Thee. Grant that I may weep over Thee as Thou didst weep over me; that I may feel moved at the sight of Thy sorrows, as Thou wert moved to compassion at the sight of my miseries. Inspire me with the fear of that justice which required of the spotless Lamb so rigorous a satisfaction; but, above all, teach me to understand the justice of suffering chastisement here on earth from the hands of Thy Father, when I consider that I have deserved the eternal punishments of the world to come.

First Point.—Application of the sight. See what passes before, during, and after the flagellation. Contemplate the excited crowd moving about the hall, eagerly awaiting the development of events. A savage curiosity is depicted in the features of all. Contemplate Jesus in the hands of the executioners. Contemplate the meekness with which He obeys them when they command Him to divest Himself of His garments. Consider how deeply He, who is modesty itself, feels this shame. See the implacable executioners binding Him to the column. All their actions betray brutality. See those lashes they hold in their hands. The frightful execution begins. The blows fall heavily and rapidly upon the body of the Son of God; shreds of His virginal flesh fly through the air; the blood flows in streams; the pillar, the pavement,

the executioners are already sprinkled with it; the whole of the sacred body is like one wound. The blows fall upon the raw flesh. They continue to strike until overcome with fatigue. Others take their places. At last one of them remembers that the Victim is reserved for a greater torment, and fearing lest He might expire too soon, he cuts the bonds which bind Him to the pillar, and Jesus falls, bathed in His blood.

Pause here a long while, and meditate. If you are not moved with compassion now you have a heart of stone. (St. Bonav.) Behold your Redeemer, bruised and mangled, hardly able to drag Himself over the bloody pavement. He is seeking His garments in order to appear before the public properly clothed. We now see Him as the prophets had announced Him, "The reproach of men, more like unto a worm than unto a man. From the sole of His feet to the top of His head there is no soundness in Him. Those wounds and bruises are not bound up nor dressed. We saw Him, and there was no more comeliness in Him. He was present to our eyes, and we asked where He was. We sought our God, and found none but a Man of sorrows, a man who was struck by the hand of God; for He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our crimes." For our crimes, O my God! Can I think of it and not be moved to sincere compassion? What shall I do for Him who has suffered so much for me? What shall I do to atone for those sins which brought on Him so many sufferings?

Second Point.—Application of the hearing. Hear the hissing sound of the blows, the executioners vying with one another, striking still heavier and heavier blows in order to exhaust the strength and patience of the adorable Lamb. Hear the people applauding their work of cruelty, the multitude which now knows no passion except that of hatred. This is He whom they had welcomed with so much delight and enthusiasm. Hear the outrageous ribaldry, the insults. Consider the conduct of Jesus. He is silent. He has been offered as a sacrifice, and opens not His mouth to complain. His heart alone speaketh: "I am ready for scourges." (Ps. xxxvii. 18.) "I put myself in place of sinners. Strike, Father, spare Me not, but spare men. And you, children of men, children of My sorrow, love Me, offend Me no more." O Jesus, how can we not love Thee? How can we continue to offend Thee? All that I see, all that I hear produces in me two sentiments: detestation of sin, love of Jesus. There is, however, in the pretorium, after the scourging of Our Lord, something else that deserves our attention. It is the voice of the blood of Jesus Christ. This sacred blood does really speak, rather

it cries out. "The voice of blood cries out." Does it cry out for revenge as did the blood of Abel? No, it cries out for mercy; it asks of God the forgiveness of sinners; it asks sinners to repent. It asks from you, priests of God, zeal, devotedness, self-sacrifice for the glory of God, and the salvation of souls.

Third Point.—Application of the smell. To the blood of Jesus Christ we must apply what is said of His name, and of all the virtue which it expresses; it is a sweet perfume which enthrals souls and produces in them a heavenly love. "Oil poured out; therefore young maidens have loved Thee." (Cant. i. 2.) Inhale these wholesome odors, which will soon permeate and purify the whole world. They already ascend up to heaven like sweet incense. Say to Jesus with the spouse of the Canticles, "Draw me, we will come after Thee to the odor of Thy ointments." (Ibid.) It was the sweet odor of the blood of Jesus Christ that infused so much vigor into martyrs, devoted priests, penitents, and virgins, and imparted to them that noble courage which enabled them to undergo any amount of suffering.

Fourth Point.—Application of the taste. Is there not much bitterness in the confusion felt by the Saviour at the thought that He is an object of hatred and horror to those who owe Him so much love, and whom He loves so tenderly? But what a treasure of sweetness in His charity, His patience, His resignation. Understand the sweet satisfaction He enjoys at the reparation of God's glory, the salvation of men which He effects, the graces which He obtains for us, the evils from which He frees us, the infinite blessings He procures for us. Enjoy the delights of holy love, which imparts a sweetness to all things bitter: *Omne amarum dulce ac sapidum efficit.* (Im. l. iii. ch. 5.)

Fifth Point.—Application of the touch. There is here much food for a tender and respectful piety. Many are here, the objects which you may touch. The instruments of torture are here still: behold the half-broken rods, reddened with blood, the cords which fastened Him, the pillar which has now become an object of veneration. Let each one bow down religiously, and kiss those spots reddened by the blood of Our Saviour. Let our tears fall upon them. Gather up this redeeming blood, offer it to God for your sins, apply it to the maladies of your soul: it is a universal remedy prepared for us by infinite mercy. "By His bruises we are healed." O Priest of God, thou drinkest this sacred blood at the altar every day; if thou dost not put an obstacle in the way, the chalice whence thou dost take it shall be for thee the chalice of eternal salvation.

Colloquy with Jesus at the scourging. End with the prayer *Anima Christi.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Application of the sight. Contemplate what passes before, during, and after the scourging. The excited crowd. Jesus in the hands of the torturers. His meekness. The pitiless executioners, who fasten the adorable Victim to the column, take up their scourges, strike Him furiously. See the flesh torn from Him, His blood running down in streams. See the divine body which is now but one wound. The cords which bound Him to the column have been cut. He falls down, bathed in His blood. See Him in the very condition wherein the prophets had beheld Him, looking less like a man than a worm. He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our crimes.

Second Point.—Application of the hearing. Hear the blows, the shouts of the scourgers inciting one another, the voices of the crowd approving the horrid work. What say the people who had so often admired Him? Deceived by the Pharisees, they have no feeling toward Him but that of hatred. What does Jesus Himself say? His heart alone speaks: Strike, O Father, strike Thy Son, but spare mankind! "I am ready for scourges."

Third Point.—Application of the smell. The blood of Jesus, like His name, is a perfume. . . . It is about to spread over the earth to purify it.

Fourth Point.—Application of the taste. How bitter for our Saviour, the thought that He is hated by those whom he so tenderly loves . . . . but how much sweetness there is in His charity, His resignation. Taste the delight He experiences, thinking of the glory of God and our salvation which He procures.

Fifth Point.—Application of the touch. The instruments of torture, the half-broken rods, the pillar, the pavement covered with blood. Gather up this precious blood. It is a universal remedy prepared for us by the physician of our souls.

MEDITATION LXXXIX.

JESUS CHRIST ON THE CROSS. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*
2.—*Hear their Words.*
3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—"They crucified Him, and with Him two others, one on each side and Jesus in the midst." (John, xix. 18.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself Calvary, on which are prepared the instruments for the punishment, and next Jesus Christ nailed to the cross.

Third Prelude.—O Jesus, victim of love, Thy sacrifice is a real holocaust, in which everything is consumed in the most ardent charity. Unite me to this sacrifice, and communicate to my heart the sentiments which animate Thine.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. A vast multitude of strangers and of inhabitants of Jerusalem are assembled around the rock of Calvary. What has brought them hither? In some it is compassion, in many curiosity, in the greater number hatred and a morbid desire to gaze upon a bloody drama. The executioners, cruel and furious to think they could not wear out the patience of their Victim. Contemplate the Pharisees, the chief priests. Their hatred should be satisfied now, for they have, or at least they think they have, blasted the reputation of Jesus forever, in having Him condemned to the most cruel and at the same time infamous death. They can hardly contain their joy. Consider the two malefactors condemned with the Saviour, to add to the ignominy inflicted upon Him. The devout women weeping. The most holy Virgin overwhelmed with grief, feeling poignantly all the sufferings of her Son. St. John, who accompanies her and shares in her affliction. He, however, who should draw all your attention, absorb all the faculties of your soul, is Jesus Christ. Contemplate Him in the hands of the executioners, see Him hanging on the cross. Here, by His sacrifice, He accomplishes the work of our Redemption. Many are the instructions to be gathered here, many the impressions to be received.

Second Point.—Hear the words. What words are heard from the people among whom Jesus "passed doing good"? "Thou who destroyest the temple of God, and buildest it up again in three days, save Thyself. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from

the cross." What is said by the ancients of the people, the chief priests, the scribes and Pharisees? "He saved others, Himself He can not save." "If He be the King of Israel, let Him come down from the cross and we shall believe in Him, He trusted in God, let Him now deliver Him, if He will have Him, for He said, I am the Son of God." Let us not pass over what is said by the two robbers. One of them "blasphemed Him, saying, if Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us." The other rebukes his companion, confesses the divinity of the Saviour and invokes Him. "Neither dost thou fear God, seeing Thou art under the same condemnation, and we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward for our deeds, but this Man hath done no evil. And he said to Jesus, Lord remember me when Thou "shalt come into Thy kingdom." Mary and the holy women are weeping; reflect on their secret colloquy with the heart of Jesus. Meditate principally on the seven words of Jesus on the cross to His Father. "My Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." To the repentant robber, "This day thou shalt be with Me in paradise." To Mary and St. John, "Woman, behold thy son, . . . behold thy Mother." "God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" "I thirst." "All is consummated." "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Hear also what the adorable Victim says to you, and resolve to follow unreservedly the inspiration of His grace.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. The executioners, having ascertained that all is ready, come back to Jesus, violently tear off the garments which have stuck to His body, renewing to a great extent the torment of the scourging. The Lamb of God stretches Himself on the altar of His sacrifice, and presents His hand to the executioner. What will he do to this divine hand, the instrument of so many blessings? He seizes it brutally, places a large nail in the palm, strikes it again and again. What torture, what pain shoots through the whole of the body at each of the blows. From one hand he goes to the other, from the hands to the feet, each moment marked by new tortures. Christ's patience is unshakable. They raise the cross; each movement lacerates His body, now entirely covered with wounds. They let it fall with its precious burden in the hole of the rock prepared to receive it. Behold in spirit the Mediator of God and of men elevated between the heavens and the earth, being, at the same time, the Sacrificer and the Sacrifice, the Priest and the Victim.

This is the place and the time to contemplate the perfection of all the virtues of which Jesus Christ gave us an example in His incarnation and during His whole life. What a perfection of humility! Could annihilation be more complete? He dies covered

with ignominy. We know that He had hungered after these sufferings. What a perfection of poverty! He dies in complete destitution; His body almost naked, not a glass of water wherewith to quench His thirst. What a perfection of generosity! For He sacrifices all interior consolations as well as His liberty, His reputation, His honor. His body, all its senses, each one of which endures particular torture. Each one of His soul's faculties has also a distinct suffering to undergo.

Now, and every time you meditate on the Passion, ask of yourself three questions: Who is He that suffers? The upheaval of nature answers you. What does He suffer? "O you all who pass by the way, attend, and see if there be a sorrow like unto My sorrow." For whom does He suffer? For me, in order to deliver me from hell, and open for me the gate of heaven. What have I ever done, what have I ever suffered, what am I willing to do and to suffer henceforth for Him who has so loved me?

Colloquy with Jesus on the cross. Beg of Him to draw your heart to Himself, according to His promise, and to animate you with the sentiments of St. Paul when he exclaimed, "He loved me, and gave Himself up for me." Ask Him to grant you His holy love, horror of sin, zeal for the salvation of souls, grace to embrace sufferings, to cherish the cross, and, like Him, not to lay it aside until you have given your soul into the hands of your heavenly Father. Recite slowly the prayer *Anima Christi*.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons concerned. The crowd on Calvary. Ask, what are the sentiments of this people? The executioners, angry because they can not wear out the patience of their Victim. The Pharisees, the chief priests give expression to their cruel joy. The two malefactors. The holy women. Mary. St. John. Jesus Christ on the cross consummating the work of our redemption.

Second Point.—Hear the words. Of the people amidst whom "Jesus passed in doing good." Of the scribes and Pharisees. Of the wicked thief and repentant one. Hear the sobs of Mary and of the holy women. Meditate with deep attention upon the seven last words of the Saviour.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. The executioners pull violently at the garments of Jesus Christ, which had stuck to His body. They sink heavy nails into His hands and into His feet. They raise the cross and let it fall into the hole excavated for this purpose. This is the place to contemplate all the virtues practised with sovereign perfection by Jesus Christ, humility,

poverty, generosity in the sacrifice; this is the place to exclaim with St. Paul: "He loved me, and gave Himself up for me."

MEDITATION XC.

SUFFERINGS OF THE APOSTOLICAL MAN: THEY ARE UNAVOIDABLE: HE EXPECTS THEM.

1.—*Because He is Placed First among the Disciples of Christ.*
2.—*Because He is the Co-operator and Minister of Christ.*

First Point.—The priest must expect to suffer much, because he is placed first among the disciples of the Saviour. In order to be admitted to the lowest rank of the disciples of Jesus, the indispensable condition is to renounce one's self, to take up one's cross and follow Him. He requires this from the beginner and of him who has progressed. He said to all, "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross every day and follow Me." (Luke, ix. 23.) To renounce one's self is to die to one's self. Death always entails suffering. To take up the cross is to accept humiliations and sorrow: this cross must be carried every day, *quotidie*. To follow, to imitate Jesus Christ is to curb nature, for He wishes us particularly to imitate His patience and resignation. It is not on Mount Thabor, but on Mount Calvary that He offers Himself as our Model. To endure suffering is common to all who have embraced Christianity. "Unto this you are called; because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps." (1 Pet. ii. 21.) To crucify one's flesh with its vices and concupiscences is the distinctive trait of the true disciples of Jesus. "They who are Christ's have crucified their flesh with its vices and concupiscences." (Gal. v. 24.)

St. Paul insists upon this fundamental truth; the harder it is to hear, the more he is bent upon its teaching. He had just passed through severe trials: Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, all the places which he had visited, had witnessed his sufferings. He is careful to declare that this is not peculiar to Himself, but that all those who will live piously according to the maxims and examples of the Saviour will suffer persecution. "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Tim. iii. 12.) Interiorly, exteriorly, from the world, from the powers of hell, everywhere they will find contradiction, pain, affliction.

But if suffering be unavoidable for every disciple of Jesus

who follows in His steps, he who is called to follow Him more closely and to walk after Him in the ways of perfection must expect to have heavier crosses. The fact of having made some progress is an additional cause of suffering. Never, says St. John Chrysostom, does the enemy of our souls wage such warfare against us as when he discovers unusual conformity between our lives and the sacred doctrine of the Gospel. Then he wishes to sift us as wheat. The greater treasures he sees in our hands, the more he wishes to deprive us of them. Hence arise those many severe, obstinate temptations, which embitter the lives of the most resolute, and induce them to complain: "We were pressed out of measure above our strength, so that we were weary even of life." (2 Cor. i. 8.) What a torture for a spiritual man, when he passes from light to the most profound darkness! What martyrdom, when to a distaste for all acts of devotion, is added an imagination disturbed by a thousand phantoms, a will tossed to and fro by opposite desires. Then he is liable to exclaim in his distress, My God, hast Thou forsaken me? Few persons indeed who are called to perfection do not pass through those painful ordeals. It may be my lot to experience such a trial, since I am placed in the first rank among the Saviour's disciples. This is not all, however.

Second Point.—The priest must expect to experience greater tribulations, because he is the co-operator and minister of Jesus Christ. Suffering is the lot of apostolic men. The reason is found in their more perfect union with the Victim of Calvary, in the nature of their vocations, the titles that they bear, and the co-operation they lend in the work of redemption.

I. Because of their more perfect union with the Victim of Calvary. The members of a body are under the control of the head: priests are the principal members of the body of Jesus Christ. *Pars membrorum Christi prima.* (St. Greg. mor. c. 16.) To Him they are so intimately united, that He is in them as His father is in Him. "I in them, and Thou in Me." (John, xvi. 23.) Through them He continues His work of reparation and salvation, enlightening the minds of men, directing their will, purifying their hearts. No one, therefore, should so closely resemble the God-Man crucified as the priest; no one should partake so abundantly of the chalice of His sufferings. "If they have persecuted Me, they shall persecute you also." He has chosen us to take part with Him in His trials. "You are they who have continued with Me in My temptations." (Luke, xxii. 28.) Where He is now, there we shall one day be. "Father, I will that where I am, they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may

see My glory." (John, xvii. 24.) To obtain this blessedness, however, we should now be where He was during His mortal life—amid temptations. If this adorable life, begun in a stable, ended on the cross, was but a series of humiliations and sufferings, such also should be the life of the priest.

II. Because of their vocation, they are the apostles of truth which the world opposes, the defenders of virtue which it persecutes, the sworn enemies of all the vices which reign in the world, so that "their hands are against all and the hands of all are against them." To enumerate all the trials suffered in all ages by those men who attempted to introduce into the world the noble stranger which is named *truth*, a large book would have to be written. This applies to truth in general, but in a much stricter sense to that crucifying truth, which humbles all pride, condemns all sensuality, and spares no evil inclination. The holy ministry is an everlasting struggle with the world, its errors, and its crimes; it requires of me that I should be ever ready to suffer.

III. Because of their titles. I am a *father* of souls. My family is numerous, but many, unfortunately, among my children afflict my heart by their disobedience, their obstinacy in following the road to perdition. I am a *pastor* and my flock is dear to me; but many are the sick in this flock, many are they that have gone astray. The former are to be healed, the latter to be sought out, brought back upon my shoulders. I am a *husbandman*—my parish is a field and a vineyard. Up to this time what fruit has it yielded? I shall not be able to put an end to sterility save by patience, self-sacrifice, by an abundance of sweat and tears. I am a *physician*, and have continual intercourse with persons whose minds and hearts are diseased. Shall I be able to compassionate those great miseries, if I have not experienced them myself? Jesus Christ, God as He was, would have been, so to say, less able to save men had He not known by experience what sorrow is. "It behooved Him, in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest." (Heb. ii. 17.) For the same motive every priest is taken from among men, so that he may find in his own infirmity the motive of a generous sympathy, whose need he is first to experience. "Who can have compassion on them that are ignorant, and that err, because he himself also is compassed with infirmity." (Heb. v. 2.) Would he be called to direct, to sustain, to console souls subject to terrible and humiliating temptations were he himself a stranger to the strifes which exist between the flesh and the spirit?

IV. Because I must co-operate in the glorious work of man's

Redemption. This I can not do efficaciously except by sufferings. The world can be saved only by the cross, and we must bear the cross. This truth often returns in my meditations. Nothing prospers except under the shadow of the cross. Jesus Christ thought of His ministers as of Himself when He said: "Unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone, but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit." (John, xii. 24.)

The learned and pious Cornelius à Lapide, commenting on these words of the Acts (ix.): "This man is to Me a vessel of election, to carry My name before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel, for I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake," points to the two-fold vocation of St. Paul, his immense apostolate and his immense suffering, and adds immediately the following reflection: *Unde liquet et Paulum aliosque electos Dei servos, magis a Deo eligi et destinari ad multa pro eo patienda, quam agenda; servitus enim Dei, aeque ac apostolatus, magis consistit in multa passione, quam operatione. Fortia agere Romanum est, fortia pati Christianum est, imo apostolicum.* (C. ix. v. 16.)

The truth is evident. In order to be a good priest, I need more patience than activity. I am obliged to labor much, but I am more obliged to suffer. I expect it, O my Master; Thou hast foretold it. "In the world you shall have distress." (John, xvi. 33), but there is no trouble connected with the expectation; for Thou hast said also, "Have confidence, I have overcome the world." Thou hast, O Lord, triumphed over the world, its sensuality, and its pride. Thou has conquered suffering and death, and the victory Thou hast gained Thou shalt also gain in my person. Dost Thou not every day strengthen me with the strength of the martyrs, or rather with Thy own strength in giving me Thy flesh and Thy blood? Ah, how great would be my patience and magnanimity if I knew how to make proper use of this heavenly food. *In illa longa morte* (Laurentius), *in illis tormentis quia bene manducaverat et bene biberat, tanquam illa carne saginatus et illo calice ebriuo tormenta non sentit.* (St. Aug. tract. 27, in Joan. n. 12.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—The priest must expect to experience great sufferings, because he is first among the disciples of the Saviour. There is no admission, not even to the lowest rank, save on condition of denying one's self, taking up one's cross and following Him. All Christians are called upon to suffer. The priest being in first among the disciples of a crucified Master ought to follow Him closely. The more the devil sees us advancing toward per-

fection, the more jealous he is of our happiness. Such is the cause of those numerous temptations which embitter life, and caused St. Paul himself to utter complaints.

Second Point.—The priest must expect to experience great sufferings, because he is the minister and co-operator of Jesus Christ. The reason of this is found in his more intimate union with the Victim of Calvary, in his vocation; he fights against error, and vice, and passion. He co-operates in the redemption of men. Mankind is saved only by the cross. "Unless the grain of wheat, falling into the ground, die, itself remains alone." To us, Our Saviour says as to His apostles, "In this world you shall have distress," but He adds, "Have confidence, I have overcome the world."

MEDITATION XCI.

THE GOOD PRIEST LOVES GREAT SUFFERINGS.

1.—*As the most Consoling Evidence of the Love of God toward Him.*
2.—*As the most Certain Proof He may Give to God of His Love.*

First Point.—The good priest loves sufferings as the evidence of God's love toward him. In the eyes of faith what are those pains, those afflictions which God either sends or permits, whether they be a deprivation or lack of pleasure, or an attack of real suffering of body or soul? They are graces, graces of predilection, graces of predestination. How deplorable that the science of the cross is so rare, even with those whose duty it is to teach it to the people.

I. Suffering is a grace. The Saviour enumerates it in the beatitudes. "Blessed are they that weep. Blessed are they who suffer persecution. Blessed are ye when they shall revile you and persecute you. Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven." (Matt. v.) Is it possible not to accept as a blessing that which leads us to true happiness? What should give us greater joy than the receiving of a grace which gives us a right to the most abundant rewards of heaven. St. Paul seems to establish a perfect parallel between the grace to believe and the grace to suffer. "Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for Him." (Phil. i. 29.) A father of the desert made the following answer to a young man who had requested him to obtain by his prayer that he would be cured: "You ask me that God would take from you that which is necessary to you; for if you be gold, the fire of tribulation shall

try you; if you be iron it will consume its rust. The affliction which you experience is not the sword of an enemy, but the rod of a father." Where should we be if free from affliction? Where would be our merits, where our virtues?

It is a grace of conversion. God is forgotten in prosperity. We return to Him when He strikes. "When He slew them then they sought Him." (Ps. lxxvii. 34.) It is a grace of perfection. Suffering purifies us and makes us worthy of God by detaching us from everything and from ourselves. It alone makes us comprehend this great lesson which the Lord gives us: "See ye that I alone am." (Deut. xxxix. 39.) I alone to be feared, I alone to be served, I alone to be loved. You put your dependence upon friends; your position is extremely pleasant; you are satisfied. I shall break those bands. You hold your honor to be something most precious. I shall permit it to be blighted. You seek rest outside of Me. Poor soul, what will you find in nothingness? I will take all those human supports from you one after another. I shall do more still. Jealous as I am to possess entirely a heart which belongs to Me alone, I shall separate you from yourself. I shall cut to the very roots your self-esteem, which savors apparently of holiness. I shall lessen those talents, those accomplishments, those inward complacencies which afford you so much consolation. Finally, when borne down with grief, you will exclaim: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me!" And you will cast yourself into My arms with the loving confidence of a son. "My Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

II. Suffering indicates predilection. What inheritance did God prepare in this world for the sacred humanity of His Son? Poverty, humiliation, a cruel and ignominious death. Jesus sends His ministers as the Father had sent Him. "Now I will not call you servants, but I will call you friends." But by what mark will they know that He loves them with peculiar affection? "If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." "Amen, I say to you that you will lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice. They will lay their hands on you and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues and into prison, dragging you before kings and governors for My name's sake. You shall be betrayed by your parents and brethren and you shall be hated by all men for My name's sake. The hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he does a service to God." (John, xv. 16; Luke, xxi.)

The apostles knew how to appreciate this token of Jesus Christ's love toward them. They are scourged by the Jewish council for preaching in the name of Jesus Christ; but "they

went rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." (Acts, v. 41.) There are many conclusive passages in the Holy Scriptures relating to this matter. "All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful." (Judith, viii. 23.) "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." (Tob. xii. 13.) "Whom He loveth He chastiseth." (Heb. xii. 6.) "It is certain," says St. Teresa, "that God leads those whom he dearly loves through difficult and laborious ways, that the dearer a soul is to Him the greater is the number of pains and sufferings that He sends to it." St. Laurence Justinian expresses exactly the same idea: *Quo quis arctius amatur, eo quoque durius in praesenti flagellatur.*

Are we blind enough to imagine that God forsakes us, when, in reality, He evidences His predilection for us? St. Chrysostom prefers the grace of suffering to the grace or power of performing miracles, and this he demonstrates as follows: "In making miracles I become debtor to God; in suffering I make God my debtor." He adds: *Profecto vinctum esse propter Christum est major gratia, quam sedere supra duodecim sedes, quam esse apostolum, quam esse doctorem, quam esse evangelistam.* (Hom. viii.: *in Ep. ad Eph.*) *Si quis me apud superos collocaret cum Angelis, aut cum Paulo vincto, eligerem carcerem et vincula; nihil enim est melius quam pati propter Christum. Non tam beatum existimo Paulum, quod raptus sit in tertium coelum, quam eum censeo beatum propter vincula. Mihi est optabilius pati cum Christo, quam honorari pro Christo. Haec est gratia quae omnia superat.* (Ib.) A holy religious, seeing himself delivered from all temptations and sorrows, was inconsolable, and said, complaining to God: *Ergone indignus sum, Domine, ut patiar pro te!*

III. Suffering is a grace of predestination. Let us again hear the holy Doctors: *Conjectura est, cum te Deus immensis persecutionibus corripit, te in electorum suorum numerum destinasse.* (St. Aug., *Ep. ad al.*) *Flagelli eruditio cum patientia, indubium prae destinationis agnoscitur esse praesagium.* (St. Laur. Just. *de Casto connub.*, c. 19.) *Electos Dei cernimus et pia agere et crudelia pati. Tribulatio est pabulum electorum.* (St. Greg.)

This principle has for its foundation the justice of God, which leaves no evil without punishment, and no good without reward. Consequently, it punishes or rewards in the next life that which it does not punish or reward in the present life. I enjoy constant prosperity. I ought to tremble; is not this transitory happiness the reward, perhaps, of my earthly virtues? If God spares me now, notwithstanding my numerous sins, will I not have to expi-

ate them in eternal torments? For the just and tried man it is quite the reverse; his faults are expiated in time, his virtues will be crowned in eternity. I will, therefore, say with Tobias in my afflictions: "I bless Thee, O Lord God of Israel, because Thou hast chastised me, and Thou hast saved me." (Tob. xli. 17.) My affliction is my salvation.

Second Point.—A good priest loves suffering as the most certain proof he may offer to God of his love. The Scripture often compares charity with gold, and sufferings to a furnace: "as gold in the furnace." (Wisd. iii. 6.) As it is fire that proves gold, so it is affliction which enables us to distinguish the true from the false love of God. Many shall present themselves before God as His friends, but He will welcome none except those who have passed through the crucible of afflictions. "Gold and silver are tried in fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation." (Ecclus. ii. 5.)

The best criterion of our love of God is our good works. Which are these good works? Not those which are pleasing to nature. Self-love may induce us to perform them. In order that we be not deceived, find some work repugnant to the dictates of self-love. Sufferings are of this nature; if I accept them through a pure desire of pleasing God, I will have every reason to believe that I love Him. The truth of Job's love toward God, says St. John Chrysostom, became manifest, not when he opened his mansions to receive strangers, but when, seeing his house in ruins, he remained true to God. St. Paul says that the true friends of God resemble those trees which spread their roots deeply, rooted in charity. (Eph.) But we can only know that our souls are firmly settled in love of Jesus Christ when we are shaken with the winds of affliction. Abraham had given to God many proofs of his fidelity; the Lord, however, was not satisfied with his love, until the moment that, in order to please Him, he consented to immolate his dear Isaac.

If, on Thy part, O my God, the cross is one of the richest gifts Thou canst offer to man, man, by accepting all the crosses Thou sendest to him, offers to Thee the most acceptable and perfect sacrifice in his power. I wish, O my God, that my life henceforth may be a continual communion of love between Thee and me. Thou shalt give me crosses, and, with Thy grace, I shall accept them with joy. If I be not worthy to suffer the martyrdom of blood, Thou wilt grant me that of abnegation. Enable me, O Jesus, to love Thee and to love the cross. May such be my lot henceforth.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—A good priest loves sufferings as the most certain evidence of God's love toward him. From the standpoint of faith sufferings are: I. Graces. The Saviour ranks them among the beatitudes. St. Paul seems to consider the grace to suffer and the grace to believe equal. They are a grace of conversion. We return to God when He has scourged us. They are a grace of perfection. Sufferings enlighten, purify our souls, detach us from everything worldly to unite us to God. II. They are graces of predilection. All those who have had the happiness to please God have had to pass through great tribulations. "Because thou wast pleasing to God, it was necessary that affliction should prove thee." St. John Chrysostom prefers the grace to suffer to the power of performing miracles. III. They are graces of predestination. The justice of God can not leave any evil unpunished, or any good unrewarded. Temporal prosperities are the reward of the false virtues of the wicked; hell shall be the punishment of their crimes. With the just it is the reverse. Time expiates their faults, eternity shall crown their virtues.

Second Point.—A good priest loves sufferings as a sure evidence of his love for God. As fire tries gold, so does affliction enable us to distinguish between false and true love. Abraham had already given to God many proofs of his fidelity. God, however, was not satisfied till the moment that he consented to the most painful of sacrifices. "Because thou hast done this thing." Oh, may I always love Jesus and love the cross. May such be my lot henceforward.

SECTION SIXTH.

GLORIOUS LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST AFTER HIS RESURRECTION; PLEDGE OF HAPPINESS; MODEL OF THE APOSTOLIC LIFE AND OF UNION WITH GOD.

PREAMBLE.

The task which is left for us to accomplish is full of sweetness. Israel, delivered from Egypt and from its hard captivity, has crossed the desert, guided by the luminous cloud; it will soon be introduced in the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey. Our soul has sundered its bonds in order to follow Jesus Christ by walking in the bright way of His examples; and by the study of that Model it has been trained to Christian and apostolic virtues. All that remains to be done now is to contract with this divine King an eternal alliance, of which love must form all the links. To obtain this end, all our reflections hereafter shall have no end than to unite us to God still more intimately through divine charity. Give us, O Lord, a permanent abode in this Promised Land, and do not allow us ever to wander beyond its limits.

MEDITATION XCII.

RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST.

1.—*The Happy Change it Operates in Him.*
2.—*The Happy Change it Promises to Us.*

First Point.—Blessed state of Jesus after His Resurrection. Joy succeeds sadness, victory succeeds the combat. During His Passion, for love of us, Jesus sacrified everything. He had not even a garment with which to cover Himself on Mount Calvary. Soldiers had divided His garments among themselves. He had

lost His reputation and honor. He had lost everything, even His life, amid appalling tortures. However, Christ rises from death. Everything undergoes a change. He recovers with interest all that He has lost. "He is the Lord of all the earth. He was the reproach of men and the outcast of the people. He is now crowned with honor and glory." He seemed in the eyes of His enemies a puppet, a mere fool. He is now the *power of God*, the God powerful in battle. He has gained the victory in this warfare, that in which He had invited us to follow Him; hell with its *gates of brass* and *its iron bars* has not been able to resist Him. He, the most beautiful among the sons of men, had become as a leper, as a man struck by the hand of God; and behold, His face has become more resplendent than the sun; nothing can compare with the beauty of His body. This divine body shines now, and shall shine for eternity, endowed with the glorious qualities which shall be the attributes of all the beatified bodies. All is over. Death shall never more have empire over Him; death has been conquered. *Resurrectionis gloria*, says St. Leo, *sepilivit morientis injuriam: ruptis vinculis mortis, infirmitas in virtutem, mortalitas in aeternitatem, contumelia transivit in gloriam; sicut tenebrae ejus, ita et lumen ejus.* Jesus, therefore, in His Resurrection recovers all that He had sacrificed, and even more. He enjoys more interior consolation, has a greater number of friends, His reputation and honor are more exalted, His glorious body is superior to His former body.

Let us rejoice with Him in His happiness, and congratulate Him for His victory. O Conqueror of death, Thou hast come out of the grave to raise Thyself above the heavens, and to cause Thy glory to shine forth through the whole earth. Let us rejoice also because we have chosen Him as our chief, and enrolled ourselves under His banner. Ah, how good it has been for us to adhere to His cause. Let us be resolute in our determination to follow Him, and to imitate Him as perfectly as we can. Let us also remember that His triumph is for us the pledge of a similar triumph.

Second Point.—The blessed state which the Resurrection of Jesus Christ promises to us. The priesthood places us first among the disciples of Jesus Christ, and makes us His ministers. These are two reasons which require us to follow Him more closely in the way of humiliation and suffering, but they also give us an assurance of a more abundant share in the joys and glory of His triumph. Our position makes us His principal disciples, the noble members of His mystical body, the eyes to enlighten, the heart to love. The members of a body are always in union with the head.

Being His ministers, we should be wherever He is. "Where I am, there also shall my ministers be." (John. xii. 26.) Ever near Him. Here below on the field of battle, after the resurrection, with Him in the brightest glory.

Let us hear and meditate on the words of St. Paul. "It is a most certain truth that if we be dead with Christ, we shall also live with Him; that if we have His trials, we shall also be associated with Him in His kingdom; that if we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified with Him. He will change our body of lowness, and make it like unto His own body, such as this body is since its Resurrection." Of this we can not doubt without sin, for God is He who declares it. He will keep His promises, provided we fulfil the conditions. Here they are: To suffer, to be tried as He, to die with Him. With this we shall live, we shall reign, we shall be crowned with Him. In one word, "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be in the likeness of His Resurrection." (Rom. vi. 5.) Can there be a promise more certain, more comforting?

Finally, the measure of our happiness shall be in due proportion to our zeal in imitating Our Saviour. "Knowing that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so shall you be also of the consolation." (2 Cor. i. 7.) Our Saviour promised this in the meditation on His kingdom. When He invited us to follow Him, He declared that each should participate in the fruits of the conquest, in due proportion to the part taken in its labors and trials.

I will, therefore, rejoice at the favor which Jesus Christ grants me, of preaching on His humiliations and His death on the cross. The more I am borne down under the load of contempt, the more I shall be exalted in glory. My heavenly wealth will be in keeping with my earthly poverty. The more I drink of His chalice of bitterness during my life, the more fully shall I be inebriated in heaven with the torrent of heavenly delights. Let us compare the duration of the rest and of the joy with the duration of the labor and of the sorrow. Jesus Christ spent only thirty-three years on earth, and about fifteen or sixteen hours amid the torments of His Passion. He is risen, risen forever. It is nineteen hundred years since He began to enjoy the fruit of His victory. Is not this well calculated to comfort us? Should it not stimulate our determination to undergo those transitory sufferings which are the pledge of an eternal and immense happiness?

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Glorious state of Jesus Christ after His Resurrection. He sacrificed all for love of us—fortune, honor, life.

He rises triumphant over death and recovers all that He had lost. Now He possesses everything. He is crowned with glory. He is "the Lord powerful in battle." Consider the glorious attributes of His body; its brightness, its impassibility, etc. Consider the immense joy of His soul. Let us rejoice in His triumph, be glad to have enrolled ourselves under His standard, and strengthen our resolution of walking closely in His steps.

Second Point.—Blessed state which the Resurrection of Jesus Christ promises to us. If we die with Him, we shall live with Him. If we are His companions in the battle of life, we shall be the companions of His triumph. He will keep His promises if we fulfil the necessary conditions. The measure of our felicity will be that of our fidelity. My wealth, my delights in the world to come, will be in due proportion to my poverty, and to my sufferings in this land of evils.

MEDITATION XCIII.

LIFE OF JESUS AFTER HIS RESURRECTION. MODEL OF THE APOSTOLIC LIFE.

1.—*Jesus Christ Risen Teaches Us how to Unite Action with Contemplation.*

2.—*Jesus Christ after His Resurrection, Teaches us how to Receive His Interior Inspirations.*

First Point.—Jesus risen teaches us how to unite action with contemplation. After His Resurrection consider the promptness of Jesus Christ in attending to the needs of His scattered sheep, and His eagerness to return to God as soon as His presence was no longer necessary to His disciples.

I. How prompt He was in seeking out, consoling, and instructing His disciples. On the same day He shows Himself near the sepulcher on the road to Emmaus, and in the cenacle of Jerusalem; no obstacle can stop Him. He has a body so supernaturally endowed as not to seem a human body. He lives; He speaks the language of heaven. "Appearing to them and speaking of the kingdom of God." (Acts, i. 3.) Behold the Model of the apostolic man. He has no thought but for the establishment and consolidation of the kingdom of God everywhere. He goes in haste where zeal calls him. All difficulties vanish when there is question of saving even one soul, of sparing God offence.

No matter how much good he may have done, he is always

anxious for the accomplishment of more. He forgets his rest, his health; others must take care of these for him. God, however, always provides. The less he thinks of his health, the more Providence watches over it. He thinks of God only, and on the salvation of men to further God's glory. With him, however, action does not interfere with contemplation.

II. The Saviour, after His Resurrection, is as prompt to return to His Father as He was to assist His disciples. He makes only the short apparitions commanded by necessity; His inclination recalls Him to God, and to solitude where it is easier to find God. So with the priest who has the true spirit of his vocation. He remains among men, and in contact with men, only as long as his ministry requires it; to him may be applied the words of Jesus Christ: "I came forth from the Father, and am come unto the world; again I leave the world, and I go to the Father." (John, xvi. 28.)

The Holy Ghost compares us with clouds which carry rain into different regions, and with doves which fly to their places of rest. (Is. lx. 8.) The clouds draw their existence from sea and rivers, and return to them after a longer or shorter circuit. Doves come out of their cots, and after a few excursions re-enter them. This conduct of Our Saviour was remarkable during all His life, but particularly after His Resurrection. In this a good priest imitates Him. He shows greater haste to enter than to leave solitude. He leaves it for the welfare of his fellow beings; he enters it in the interest of his soul. His frequent communications with God in the holy exercises of interior life are as useful to the world as to himself.

Second Point.—Jesus after His Resurrection teaches us how to receive His interior inspirations. The perfection of our union with God through Jesus Christ being the perfection of our holiness, the Saviour facilitates that union through visits wherein He communicates Himself to our souls, and inflames them with His love. It is important that we should be acquainted with the nature, the time, and the effects of these visits, so as to turn them to our profit, and not be unworthy to receive them. We find a figure of those visits in the different apparitions of Jesus after His Resurrection. Let us consider who are they to whom He appears, the manner and the end of the apparitions.

I. Our Saviour after His Resurrection appeared to souls that were pure, devoted to Him, and grieved over His death. We can readily imagine the transports of devotion of Mary Magdalen, and the other women who were favored with His first apparitions. The deep affliction of the heart of St. Peter, who had denied Him.

We know how sad were the disciples on their way to Emmaus. They can speak of nothing but of the subject of their grief. "What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad? Concerning Jesus of Nazareth." (Luke, xxiv. 17, 19.)

"Blessed is that soul which hears the Lord speaking within her, and from His mouth receives the word of comfort. Blessed are those ears which hear the sounds of divine communings and take no notice of the whisperings of the world. It is a great art to know how to converse with Jesus, and to know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom." But here is the secret of this divine art: "Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with thee; be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with thee. This is the reason why there are found so few contemplative persons, because there are few that wholly wean themselves from the love of transitory and created things. Many are found who desire contemplation, but there are few who adopt the practices of piety necessary to compass this object. One serious impediment is that we practise very little perfect mortification. Take this short and perfect axiom: "Forsake all and you shall find all." (Imit. Ch. Passion.) No man, indeed, can deserve this precious gift; but God is so good that He grants it to the generosity and constancy of our efforts.

Jesus appears at times in His natural body; they recognize His face, His voice, His manners, they can see the very marks of His wounds. At other times He appears under the borrowed features of a traveler, of a gardener, but soon makes Himself known; a gesture, an action, which seems to escape Him, indicate that it is He. One word from His lips occasions transports of joy and love, which He alone can produce. "Jesus said to her: Mary! she, turning, says to Him: Rabboni! which is to say, master." (John, xx.) By two effects the presence of Jesus can be discerned: 1. His visits do not occasion fright; they carry with them calmness and serenity. 2. Short as they may be, they leave the soul full of comfort. It is quite the reverse with the evil spirit, who inspires none but sinister thoughts, sentiments of trouble or despondency.

"Happy hour when Jesus substitutes joy for grief." (Im. l. 11.) It, however, comes but seldom, and passes away with rapidity. "There is born in the heart," say St. Bernard, "a ray of light, an outpouring of sweetness. No one knows it except the person feeling it, and this very person hardly knows it himself, because it passes off immediately." We would wish to remain in the company of the Saviour. How hard to hear Him say: Touch Me not; as yet you have not the qualities requisite to fully enjoy My pres-

ence. Should God grant to our desires some of those consoling visits, let us not forget the following admonition: *Potes cito fugare Jesum et gratiam ejus perdere, si volueris ad exteriora declinare.* (Im. l. ii, c. 8.)

II. What was the object of the Saviour in appearing to His disciples? He intended to strengthen their faith, to prepare their souls for new trials, to encourage them to undertake great things for His glory. Such also are the results of those interior visitations of which we speak. St. Thomas the incredulous was one of those who proclaimed their faith more openly. Oftentimes, also, God shows Himself to those whom He intends to try. He arms His soldiers for the fight; light is followed by darkness. This succession of joys and sufferings is noticeable in the lives of illustrious saints. Consolations of long duration would enervate our virtues, and our courage would give way were God to hide Himself from us for a long time. Finally, when He manifests Himself to apostolic men, it is nearly always to excite them to do and to suffer great things for the glory of His name. Such was the effect of the apparitions with which the early preachers of the Gospel were favored. We should deserve to have no share in them if we were not always ready to "leave God for God."

Let us deem ourselves unworthy of those graces which we admire in the saints; but let us not do anything which would oblige God to deprive us of them. If He grants them to us, let us think more of the Donor than of the gifts themselves, and consider the favors simply as motives and means to procure His greater glory.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ risen teaches us to unite action with contemplation. Consider how promptly He seeks out, instructs, and comforts His disciples. On the same day He shows Himself in three different places. So does the good priest act. Nothing can impede his actions. He forgets himself in order to think only on God and souls. Jesus Christ, after His Resurrection, is as prompt to return to His Father as to attend to the wants of His disciples. Let us do the same. Let our visits to people be short and ordered by necessity. The Spirit of God compares us to clouds and to doves. Let the welfare of our fellow beings draw us out of our solitude, and let the interest of our own soul bring us back to it.

Second Point.—Jesus Christ, after His Resurrection, teaches us how to discern and how to receive His interior inspirations. The Saviour showed Himself to souls which were pure, devoted

to Him, and grieved on account of His death. Let us remember Mary Magdalen, the disciples of Emmaus. Few persons entirely give up things of earth, and, therefore, there are few souls which are favored with those visits and intimate communications of God. Jesus Christ appears sometimes in His person, sometimes under borrowed features; but He always makes Himself known. His visits always bring peace and comfort. The object of these visits is to strengthen the faith and to prepare for new trials. When He visits apostolic men, it is generally in order to incite them to do and to suffer great things for the glory of His name.

MEDITATION XCIV.

ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST. CONTEMPLATION.

1.—*Contemplate the Persons Concerned.*

2.—*Hear their Words.*

3.—*Consider their Actions.*

First Prelude.—"Jesus led the disciples to Bethany, and there, raising His hand, He blessed them; and whilst He blessed them, He parted from them, and they saw Him going up to heaven, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." (Luke, xxiv.; Acts, i. 4.)

Second Prelude.—Represent to yourself the Mount of Olives, and on the mount a great number of disciples.

Third Prelude.—Beg of Jesus Christ to raise up our hearts, and to inspire us with a strong desire to see Him in His glory.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. Consider the great number of the disciples. Their hearts are divided between the joy of seeing Jesus and the fear of losing Him. Some are as yet in doubt, but the greater part are fully convinced of the Resurrection. These appear to be full of joy; their hearts expand with love as they behold their good Master. Consider how careful they are to listen to all His words, to watch all His movements. Let us contemplate Him ourselves. Contemplate the benignity, the majesty, the radiance of His countenance. His wounds shine brilliantly, His appearance breathes an expression of the most tender benevolence. Let us also contemplate those two angels dressed in white. They come to arouse the apostles from their ecstasy, and to give them profitable instruction. Let the words of the angels instruct us also. Finally, consider the apostles coming down from the mountain filled with joy, and making preparations for the reception of the Holy Ghost.

Second Point.—Hear the words. Jesus gives His apostles His last instructions. He opens a vast field to them, before placing before their eyes an image of the glory which will be the reward of their zeal. Never before did His language reveal so strikingly that He is the Master of the universe. "All power has been given Me, in heaven and on earth: go, therefore, through the whole world, preach the Gospel to every creature, teach all nations, baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you." This task would be above your strength were you left to yourselves; but My love has provided the necessary means. Not only will I send the Holy Ghost, who will impart to you a power which will destroy all obstacles, but I Myself, though going up to heaven, where I will prepare a place for you, I shall abide with you, speaking through your mouth, acting through your ministry, and this privilege will last to the very end of the world.

I, also, together with that multitude of laborers which He was to call in the course of ages to continue the mission of the apostles, was present on that day to the mind of Jesus Christ. I also was one of those whom He encouraged by those words. What then have I to fear? Has He not fulfilled His promise during the nineteen hundred years past? Has He not justified the confidence of the Church and of all good priests?

Let us hear the two angels who come to draw the disciples from their delightful ecstasy. "You, men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven?" The time has not yet come for you to go thither, there to share the happiness of your Master. Go and deserve it through your labors, even by the sacrifice of the most celestial delights. An apostle is a man of action; he can not make contemplation his permanent state. What loss to the world if they who were thus addressed by the heavenly messengers had remained on that mountain, where existence was so delightful even after Jesus had departed from them. Let us be men of prayer, but also men of action. Let us keep before our minds the remembrance of God, and in our heart the spirit of prayer. If our hearts be habitually raised up to heaven, our actions will possess more fervor and further God's glory more.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus raises His hands and blesses His disciples. Think of the emotion of their hearts. While waving His blessing to them He rises higher and higher. "He was carried up to heaven." Consider the marvel and sublimity of the spectacle. Wonderment and awe filled those very disciples who had seen Him walk on the waters and perform so

many prodigies. Jesus is with His apostles; He speaks, and while listening to Him with admiration they see Him going up slowly to heaven. He ascends to heaven, whence He had come. He goes to that kingdom to which they can not go now, but into which they will follow Him later.

"And a cloud received Him out of their sight." Jesus disappears. For earth the spectacle is ended; for heaven it is beginning. The angels, the archangels, all the heavenly powers advance to meet their King, singing His triumph. All the just who died from the beginning of the world, all those who rose with the Saviour, congregate around Him and form a cortège. "Be opened, eternal gates!" Behold the King of glory with His court, He is the Lord, strong and powerful in battle. He is the Lamb of God that was immolated, He is Jesus, the Liberator of His people, the Redeemer of the human race. He is ascending and will sit at the right hand of His Father, and take possession of His kingdom both for Himself and for all those who will apply to themselves the merits of His Redemption. The angels continue their triumphant song, and the saints whom Jesus takes with Him into heaven enter the glory of their Lord. From that day heaven is opened. However, to enter there, we must follow the road which the Saviour has marked out for us; it is full of thorns, but let us contemplate the goal.

"Then they returned to Jerusalem, from the mount that is called Olivet." (Acts, i. 12.) The sacred writer forgets not to mention the circumstance of the place. Many were the recollections connected with this Mountain of Olives. At the foot of this mount the apostles had seen their Master pale, trembling in the torments of an agony of blood; here they had seen Him arrested, bound with cords, led away like a criminal. This is our starting-point for heaven, let us fear neither humiliations nor sufferings. The disciples return to Jerusalem with great joy. (Luke, xxiv.) What they have seen and heard has revived their faith, animated their hope, stimulated their love. Let us participate in their happiness. He who has gone up to heaven is our Master as well as theirs; He ascended to heaven for us as well as for them; let us labor as they did to make Him known and loved by men. *Quia Christi Ascensio nostra provectio est, et quo processit gloria capitis, eo spes vocatur et corporis; dignis, dilectissimi, exultemus gaudiis, et pia gratiarum actione laetemur. Hodie enim non solum paradisi possessores firmati sumus, sedetiam coelorum in Christo superna penetravimus: ampliora adepti per ineffabilem Christi gratiam, quam per diaboli amiseramus invidiam.* (St. Leo de Asc.)

Colloquy with Jesus Christ receiving in His triumphant Ascension the reward of His labors and sufferings. With the angels, and all those admitted to contemplate His glory in this mystery, let us adore Him. Let us beseech Him to impart to us the blessings He gave to His apostles when He bade them farewell, and that it may be for us, as it was for them, the pledge of the eternal blessing promised to His zealous and faithful ministers. O Jesus, detach my heart from all that is earthly; fix all my affections on Thee alone, grant that all my sighs and desires be for Thee, and for the blessed abode and glorious home wherein Thou livest and reignest forever and ever.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Contemplate the persons. All those disciples whose hearts are divided between the joy of seeing Jesus and the fear of losing Him. Jesus Christ. Consider the sweetness, the majesty, of His sacred countenance. Contemplate the radiance emanating from His sacred person. Contemplate the two angels, the disciples descending from the mountain full of joy, going to prepare themselves to receive the Holy Ghost.

Second Point.—Hear the words. Listen to the last recommendations of Jesus Christ to the apostles: "All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore through the whole world, teach, baptize. I shall be with you till the consummation of the world." Let us hear the two angels: "Men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven?" What loss for the world if the apostles whom they addressed had remained on the mountain! Let us sacrifice the most sublime delights to the glory of God and the salvation of our brethren.

Third Point.—Consider the actions. Jesus raises His hands, blesses, rises up toward heaven, whence He had come down. The cloud. He sitteth at the right hand. Applause of all the choirs of angels, of the saints which accompany Him. They return to Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives. At the foot of the mountain they had seen Him in His agony, betrayed, loaded with chains. Suffering is the starting-point in order to obtain eternal beatitude.

MEDITATION XCV.

THE GOOD PRIEST IN HEAVEN.

1.—*He has no Sufferings to Bear.*
2.—*Every Desire Satisfied.*
3.—*No Change to Fear.*

First Point.—In heaven there is no suffering for the good priest. It is true that to reach heaven, the good priest had, in following the steps of his Master, to experience a life of tribulation. "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." (Acts, xvi. 21.) But he has now reached the end of all his trials. Of him they may now say, "Evil shall not come near thee." In heaven there are no sufferings, neither for the body, nor for the heart, nor for the soul. The good priest is forever relieved of a heavy burden. The sufferings of the body are numerous; they wear out our life in so many ways that this is less a life than one long, enduring death. *Quaedam prolixitas mortis.* No sufferings for the heart, such as grief, sadness, disappointments, often concealed under an appearance of prosperity. On earth a wound is hardly closed but another is inflicted. No sufferings for the soul. No heaviness of mind nor obscurity of intellect, no troublesome temptations nor inclinations to evil; no interior anxieties, which caused many holy priests to exclaim with the adorable Crucified: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Ah, how true it is that our present state offers us nothing but vanity and affliction of spirit. "But He who sat on the throne said: Behold I make all things new, mourning, nor crying, nor sorrowing shall be any more; for the former things have passed away." (Apoc. xxi.) Good priest, your life is a life of tears, but remember the hand which will soon wipe them away forever. "God shall wipe every tear from their eyes." (Ib. vii. 17.) Comfort yourself with the thought of this heavenly Jerusalem, where all your sufferings shall be ended forever.

Jesus preserves the marks of His wounds in the midst of glory. Laurence and the other martyrs remember their torments; the good priest recalls the sad condition of the field which he cultivated with so much pain. This shall be a part of his reward. As the captive restored to liberty remembers with pleasure the long, sorrowful days of his prison life, and as the sailor after reaching port loves to think on past dangers, thus, in heaven, there

will remain of all past sufferings but a remembrance of delight; for past battles we shall wear a glorious crown, and to dangers of the past there will succeed a sweet security.

Second Point.—In heaven every holy desire satisfied. Heaven is the complement of all desires; the whole man, spiritual and corporal, finds therein the most complete beatitude. This same body of ours, now so material, so sensible to pain; this body liable to weakness, whose gross appetites we have to subdue by mortification, will be reformed according to the likeness of the glorified body of Jesus Christ, will have the brightness of the sun, the agility of winds, the subtlety and impassibility of angels. But as our merits, considered in themselves, belong to the soul, so also our souls shall receive the greater share of delights in heaven.

I. Consider the joy of the soul of the good priest, when his memory will recall to him the graces which he made use of, the temptations which he overcame, the virtues which he practised. Will he not delight to think on the children and the ignorant whom he instructed so patiently, on the sick which he visited. Blessed indeed were those afflictions, glorious the humiliations, happy the sufferings! I would have been lost if not for you. You purified me, detached me from the world and from myself. You have saved me! Where now should I be had I succumbed to that temptation, had I resisted that inspiration of grace?

II. The mind of the priest shall see God. "We now see as through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face." (1 Cor. xiii. 12.) He shall know God as He is known. We are created for truth, and when we get a glimpse of it on earth, it causes us emotions of joy. Recall to mind the delight of an Archimedes, of a Newton, of a St. Thomas after some scientific discovery; above all, recall to mind the ecstasies of the saints. If so feeble a ray of light, escaping through so many clouds, so enraptures the soul at a time when it is buried in matter, what will be the soul's transport of joy when, entering eternal glory, it will contemplate God as He is (John, iii. 2), in all the splendor of His infinite perfection? Then it is that, embracing in one view the wisdom of the designs of God, and comprehending the extent of His love for men, we shall fathom the depth of those mysteries which we believe in our faith. We shall pass from wonder to wonder, from ravishment to ravishment, and as each moment will bring us new knowledge, it will also bring us an increase of happiness.

Then, says St. Augustine, we shall praise God, *laudabimus*. Why? We shall praise Him for Himself, for His wisdom, which is deeper than the abyss; for His justice, more exalted than the

mountains; for His goodness, more extensive than the earth and the heaven; for His ineffable perfections, summed up, as it were, in His infinite sanctity. Holy, Holy, Holy! We shall bless Him for everything, for having made us men, Christians, priests, but especially for making us saints. We shall bless Him particularly for the humiliations and sufferings which He sent us. We shall see His true tenderness for His children when He sent them affliction. In heaven, everything, our very miseries, our temptations, nay, to a certain extent our sins, which will have proved His patience and goodness, shall be a motive to praise and to bless Him for ever and ever. Yet what is the bliss of the mind compared to the bliss of the heart? *Amabimus.*

III. The will shall possess God, and in God all good. Love is the life and felicity of the heart. The greater the perfection, the more intimate the possession of the object beloved, the greater the happiness of the heart. Who on earth can tell us of the intensity of love in heaven? There is much happiness, even in this valley of tears, in loving God, imperfect as our love may be. Recall the experience of St. Francis Xavier when he cried out, "Enough, O Lord, enough!" But earthly love is not the love of heaven. God gives Himself entirely to His faithful servant for the purpose of making Him happy. He puts in operation, as it were, all His infinite perfections. "Enter into My joy," He says, "for My joy could not enter within you; have a share in My happiness, set no bounds to your desires; I set no bounds to My blessings. Cast yourself into the abyss of My immensity, lose yourself in My being, live My life. Ever satiated and ever thirsting, desire and possess, possess and desire always." Contemplate that soul in that ocean of delights. Think of its emotions, its transports. Its gratitude bursts forth in canticles of praise.

Third Point.—In heaven no change is to be feared. The joys of earth are of short duration, fortunes the most solid are often ruined. There is no constant happiness, save in the heavenly country. Of the kingdom of Christ there shall be no end, and the throne of His elect is as immovable as His own. God has promised it. "But the just shall live forever."

The joys of heaven are eternal. Consider the pleasure of the thought: "I no longer suffer and I shall never suffer. I am happy, and shall be so eternally. Thou lovest me, O Lord, and I love Thee. Thou wilt love me, and I shall love Thee forevermore. I am Thine, Thou art mine, and nothing henceforth will impair our union. Neither life nor death, nor height nor depth, nor things present nor things to come, shall be able to destroy my happiness, or even to diminish it. *O dies aeternitatis clarissima,*

quam nox non obscurat, sed summa veritas semper irradiat! . . O utinam dies ila illuxisset! (Imit. Lib. iii. ch. xlvii.) "The eye of man has not seen, his ear has not heard, it has not been given the heart of man to understand the things which God has prepared to those who love Him." (1 Cor. ii. 9.)

But since this is so, there is nothing that I should not sacrifice to obtain this infinity and eternity of blessings. "Son, be not dismayed with the labors which thou hast undertaken for Me, neither let the tribulations which befall thee quite cast thee down; but let my promise strengthen thee, and comfort thee in every event. Thou shalt not labor here long. Wait a little while, and thou shalt see a speedy end of all thy evils. Do thy part well, mind what thou art about, labor faithfully in My vineyard; I will be thy reward. Write, read, sing, sigh, keep silence, pray, bear thy crosses manfully; eternal life is worthy of all these, and greater combats. Oh, if thou hadst seen the everlasting crown of the saints in heaven. They are now comforted, they are secure, they are now at rest, and they shall for all eternity abide with Me in the kingdom of My Father." (Im. l. iii. 47.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—In heaven there are no more sufferings. Neither for the body, nor for the heart, nor for the soul. Sufferings of the body. Life is nothing but one long enduring death. Sufferings of the heart, concealed sometimes under fine appearances, and the more painful on that account. Sufferings of the soul, which urged many to exclaim: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" When will the day come on which we may be able to say that all our evils are past to return no more?

Second Point.—No good to be desired. Heaven is the fulfilment of all desires. Man, corporally and spiritually, finds therein the most complete happiness. Consider what an admirable transformation for the body, but, above all, consider the delight of the soul. Consider what memory will recall to our minds. We will exclaim, O blessed afflictions, O holy trials, you were the means of our salvation! Consider the happiness of the intellect enlightened by the full radiance of truth. We shall pass from wonder to amazement. We shall bless God particularly for those tribulations of which we are so often inclined to complain. The will shall possess God, and in God shall possess everything.

Third Point.—No change to be feared. The reign of Christ and His servants shall never end. O welcome day of eternity, when wilt thou shine for me? The eye of man has not seen, his ear has not heard, it has never been given the heart of man to

conceive the extent of the happiness which God has prepared for those who love Him.

MEDITATION XCVI.

JESUS CHRIST THE FRIEND OF THE PRIEST.

1.—*Jesus Christ is our Friend.*
2.—*We should also be His.*

What man would not think himself happy could he persuade himself that the Son of God is really his Friend—that he is one of those to whom Our Saviour said on the eve of His death: "I shall not henceforth call you servant; . . . but I have called you friend"? Yet this is the privilege of my holy and sublime state. O heavenly vocation! O sublime dignity of the priesthood! I am the friend of Jesus. Could any title afford more glory and more comfort?

First Point.—Jesus is the friend of the priest. There is but one priesthood. The priesthood of Jesus Christ, that of the apostles, and our own, are essentially one and the same priesthood. That one priesthood was for the apostles, and is for ourselves the ground of this divine friendship. It was after ordaining His first priests that the Son of God said to them: "I will not now call you servants, I will call you friends." The same words were addressed to us in our ordination by the bishop, and at the same time repeated within our hearts by Jesus Christ, whom we had just received. Let us compare them with the words of the Wise Man: "A faithful friend is a strong defence, and he that has found him has found a treasure. Nothing can be compared to a faithful friend. A faithful friend is the medicine of life and immortality." (Ecclus. vi. 14, 15, 16.) "Blessed is he that findeth a true friend." (Ib. xxv. 12.)

I. Friendship is confident. David places his fate in the hands of Jonathan. Jesus confides to St. John the care of His Mother. We depend upon a friend as on ourselves. We give up to him all our thoughts, all our interests; this is also what Our Saviour did to the apostles and to us. The former are admitted to the knowledge of all He had heard from the Father; from them He conceals nothing; to them He gives the intelligence of the truths which He teaches others under the veil of parables only; to them He gives His entire confidence. Does Jesus Christ show less confidence in us? To us He leaves the care of dispensing His

mysteries, of applying His merits. He wants us to protect His honor, to utilize His blood, to defend and to comfort His Church, to instruct, regenerate, and save souls which He so dearly loves. He confides His own person to us, leaving to us the consecration and custody of His body, and the duty of preaching His religion and proclaiming Him God. Let us ask ourselves: Shall He be visited or forsaken, shall He be honored or insulted in His sanctuary? We are left to decide. O Lord, Thy confidence in us is so great as to exclude the possibility of disloyalty.

II. Friendship is generous. A friend is ready to make every sacrifice. Think of all Our Saviour did and sacrificed during His life, but particularly at the time of His death, to manifest the strength and fervor of His affection for mankind. As priests enjoy a greater share in His merits and in His favors, it is safe to say that what He did and suffered for all men, He did and suffered particularly for His ministers; but, moreover, in giving them the power to immolate Him every day, subjecting Himself to all the consequences which He knew would flow from this unspeakable mystery, He submitted Himself to humiliations and reproaches which would be a perpetual martyrdom. Behold the Friend who forgets Himself entirely for the sake of His friends.

III. Between those whom friendship unites everything is in common. My friend is my *alter ego*. What I give him I do not lose. Is there anything that Jesus gives not to His friends? *Omnia quae habuit nobis dedit: dedit regnum suum, dedit et scipsum.* (St. Bonav.) When He gave us the superintendence of His house, did He not place in our hands the keys of His treasures, inviting us to draw liberally upon them, both for our brethren and for ourselves?

Speaking to His Father, He said: "All mine are Thine, and Thine are mine." (John, xvii. 10.) What touching intercourse also between Jesus Christ and His priest! Community of goods and of evils, of battles and of triumphs; community of outrages and of honors from the people. We have the same friends, the same enemies; they who are for Him are for us, they who persecute us persecuted Him first. Community of projects and of intentions. His mission is our mission: "As the Father has sent Me, so do I send you." Community of means to a certain end, to preach, to console, to go after the stray sheep. What the Saviour did, we do. By immolation of Himself, Christ redeemed the world, and after Him the apostles and good priests never thought that they could efficaciously save souls, except by uniting their sufferings to the sufferings of the Son of God. Community of destinies. In this world, Jesus Christ and the priests have the same joys and the

same sorrows; at the Last Day we shall judge the nations with Him; in eternity we shall share the honor of His table and of His throne. "I prepare for you as the Father hath prepared for Me a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and that you may sit upon thrones judging." (Luke, xxii. 29, 30.) He wishes His friends to be ever with Him, now in His trials and later in the glory of His kingdom. It is really so. I am the friend of Jesus. *O mira divinae bonitatis dignatio! Servi digni non sumus, et amici vocamur. Quanta dignitas est hominum, esse amicos Dei.* (St. Greg.)

Second Point.—The priests should be the friends of Jesus Christ. Though the object of friendship may change, the nature of friendship does not change. If we really possess this friendship, it will be confident, devoted, unreserved, as it was in Jesus Christ.

I. It is strange that we do not abandon ourselves fully to Our Lord, a friend so faithful, who condescends to give Himself to us, notwithstanding all the reasons we have given Him to mistrust us. When declaring to His apostles that He made them His friends, He pointed to this sacred friendship as the reason which would induce His Father to grant them all that they would ask in His name. He promised them, moreover, that if they abided in Him, He would abide in them. God willingly listens to us who are the friends of His beloved Son; and this Almighty Friend is always with us. These thoughts are well calculated, indeed, to establish in us an unshaken confidence, notwithstanding the perils, sorrows, and contradictions which we will find in our pathway.

A faithful friend is a strong defence. Human friendships, even the most sincere of them, can do but little. But how good it is to lean upon the friendship of God! St. Paul finds pleasure in his infirmities; he glories because he is weak; and why? Because the friendship of Jesus Christ sustains him, and it is principally in his weakness that he experiences its power, as it is also in his infirmities that he has recourse to its intercession. After so often declaring his nothingness, he boasts that he can do all things, not of himself, but through the divine Friend who is his support and his strength. "I can do all things in Him who comforts me." Despondency in a priest, then, is an offence to Christ. It is a sort of blasphemy against the divine Heart of Jesus, for it amounts to saying that His friendship is powerless, that His promises are vain. Can they inflict on Him a more painful wound?

II. His friendship should be generous. Was it not generosity itself which spoke through the lips of St. Paul when he said, "The charity of Jesus Christ urges us." We should induce others to love the Saviour whom we love; we shall show ourselves His loyal

ministers; we shall sustain His cause, "In much patience, in tribulations, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in prisons, in seditions, in labors, in watchings, in fastings, by honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report." (2 Cor. vi. 4.) St. Francis Xavier was indignant at the thought that men did more for love of gain than was done for love of souls, and that to win souls to Jesus Christ ministers had not dared expose themselves to perils which merchants readily faced to acquire wealth.

III. The good priest, the friend of Jesus Christ, should converse with Jesus Christ. A good priest has a holy sensitiveness to everything which concerns the interests of his Saviour. He is deeply afflicted by every offence against his adorable Friend, and rejoices at everything which contributes to His glory. He also loves to pour his sorrows into His bosom; to communicate to Him his joys, to solicit His light, to expose to Him his desires, to speak to Him of his hopes and his fears; in his reverses he loves to go to Him for consolation, and to Him he offers the homage of his successes. O blessed, delightful communion and familiarity, which the King of the universe permits us! Consider the honor, the pure joys, the peace, for those whom He raises to the rank of His friends, and who endeavor to live up to this admirable title. "Thy friends, O Lord, are honored exceedingly." (Ps. cxxxviii. 17.)

O Jesus, I am about to ascend the altar. Here Thou givest me the most touching evidence of a friendship which I little deserve. Was there ever a friend who gave his friend his flesh to eat and his blood to drink, in order to be united to him more intimately? Come, O Thou the most noble, the most generous, the most perfect of all friends! Thou willest me to be one with Thee, and that our friendship should be like unto that which unites Thee to Thy Father; do then impart to my heart all the sentiments, all the inclinations of Thy own. Grant, O holy God, that I may be to Thee what Thou condescendest to be to me, an unworthy sinner; grant that I may be to Thee a confident, devoted friend, zealous for all Thy interests, living more for Thee than for myself. Grant me constancy, so that our union, begun here on earth, cemented every day by Thy sacred blood, may be consummated in a glorious eternity. "The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as We also are one, I in them and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one." (John, xvii. 22, 23.) End by reciting *Suscipe.*

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Jesus Christ is the Friend of the priest. I. Friendship is confident. We depend upon a friend as much as we

do on ourselves. Such is the friendship of Jesus Christ for His priests. II. Friendship is generous. What did not Jesus Christ do and suffer; what does He not do now in the interest of His disciples, but particularly of His priests? III. Friendship is lavish of its advantages. Between friends everything is common. Is not everything common between Jesus Christ and ourselves? *Omnia quae habuit nobis dedit; dedit re genum suum, dedit et seipsum.*

Second Point.—The priests should bestow on Jesus Christ the same tokens of friendship which they receive from Him. Is it not strange that we dare not confide in a God, a friend so faithful, when He condescends to confide in us? When will our zeal for His glory resemble the zeal of His friendship for us? "In much patience, tribulations?" Friendship is outspoken. The good priest loves to pour the sorrows of his soul into the bosom of Jesus; he loves to tell Him of his joys. "Thy friends, O God, are honored exceedingly."

MEDITATION XCVII.

THE EUCHARIST A BOND OF UNION BETWEEN JESUS CHRIST AND HIS MINISTERS.

1.—*Love of Jesus Christ for the Priests in the Holy Eucharist.*
2.—*What He Expects of them in this Mystery.*

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself the Saviour in the cenacle, consecrating His first twelve priests, and instituting the Eucharist.

Second Prelude.—Ask for a strong faith in this mystery, which is the glory and happiness of the priesthood, and for a tender love for Jesus Christ there present, immolating and giving Himself to us under the appearances of bread and wine.

First Point.—Love of Jesus Christ for priests in the Holy Eucharist. The Council of Trent calls this mystery, *Effusio divitiarum amoris Christi;* and St. John Chrysostom, *Omnis thesaurus beneficentiae Dei; mysterium faciens ut terra nobis coelum sit.* Everything in it shows forth the ardent charity of the Saviour for men, but especially for priests. Let us contemplate three objects which we continually find in our churches: The tabernacle, His dwelling-place; the altar, the place of His immolation; the holy table, where He gives Himself to us.

I. Jesus Christ dwells in the tabernacle. "Behold the tabernacle of God with men, and He will dwell with them." (Ap. xxi. 3.)

Not now, in a distant country, in one spot only. He is near us in all the sanctuaries of the Catholic Church; His house is in the midst of our dwellings. This is His holy will. Every suffering member of His numerous family shall have the privilege at all times to come to Him for comfort and relief. Ah! He is really our Emmanuel, "God with us." For over nineteen hundred years the Holy Eucharist has been in the Church, our spiritual world, that which the sun is in the physical world. It imparts light, heat, fecundity. How many illusions have been dissipated by this divine Sun. How many virtues it has produced in the soul. How many heroic actions it has inspired. We are, in one respect, more favored than those who saw the Son of God during His mortal life. They possessed Him in His state of infirmity we possess Him in His state of glory. He was among them only at intervals, leaving one to visit another. With us it is different. He never leaves us; we enjoy His presence as often and as long as we desire to enjoy it.

This is the privilege of all the faithful, but how much more blest and glorious is the privilege of priests! Of this treasure they are the guardians, they give it to the world. Were there no priesthood on earth, there would be no Eucharist. O Priest of God, it would be painful to have it said of you: "There is One in the midst of you whom you know not."

II. He immolates Himself on the *altar*. What sort of sacrifice is this? What is its value? Who is its minister? *Eminet inter omnia, quae in sacris habentur mysteriis et actionibus, missae sacrificium, et rei dignitate, et sacerdotis praestantia, et fructus excellentia.* (Coun. Aquil., anno 1596.) *Nullus profecto valet humano explicare eloquio quam locuples fructus, quantave ex ejus oblatione spiritualia exuberant bona. Reconciliatur quippe peccator Deo, justus autem justificatur adhuc, laetificantur angeli, cummulantur merita, facinora remittumtur, augentur virtutes, resecantur vitia, diaboli machinamenta superantur, sanantur aegri, eriguntur lapsi, debiles refocillantur. . . . defuncti fideles liberantur.* (St. Laur. Just. serm. de Euch.) Nowhere else does the priest give so much glory to God, nor receive so many favors for himself. Oh, if I knew the extent of my power at the altar, would I even for one day neglect to make use of it, for the honor of God, the consolation of the Church, my personal sanctification, the salvation of the whole world? *Pro nostra et totius mundi salute.*

III. At the *holy table*. He gives Himself. "He who eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me and I in Him." (John, vi. 57.) "Take and eat," says He to us, "this is My body, My soul, My divinity; it is all that I have, all that I am. Yes, take

it; to you I give it. Nourish yourself with My substance; incorporate your Saviour with yourself, become other Christs." Oh, how high above our thoughts are the thoughts of Jesus Christ! How great His heart, how vast His designs, how precious and magnificent His gifts!

In the mystery of the Incarnation the Son of God gave Himself to the entire human family. Here He condescends to give Himself to each one of us. He unites Himself to us. Consider the nature of this union. He compares it with that of the Father and of the Son, who have but one and the same nature. "As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me, the same also shall live by me." (John, vi. 58.) From My Father who lives eternally I receive My life; I live by Him; so also whoever is nourished with My body receives life from Me, and liveth by Me." The life we receive from Jesus Christ in communion is a divine life, through the increase and development of the life of grace. *O stupor indicibilis charitatis! Quis non contremiscat? Quis non cum exultatione miretur?* (St. Laur. Just.)

O priests of the sanctuary, how rich you are! Enjoying as you do the delights of this banquet, you have no need, indeed, of the joys of earth. You are the first guests at the table of Jesus, and you do its honors. *Cujus officium committi voluit solis presbyteris, quibus sic congruit, ut sumant et dent caeteris.* Because of their occupations and duties, the greater part of the faithful can enjoy this happiness but seldom; but I, if it be my wish, can enjoy it every day.

Second Point.—Evidences of love which Jesus Christ expects of us in the Holy Eucharist. Fidelity to practise, zeal to propagate, to keep up and develop devotion toward this adorable Sacrament.

I. Practise devotion toward the Holy Eucharist. Visit Our Lord in His *tabernacle* assiduously, offer Him with profound religion at the *altar*, receive Him at the *holy table* with an ever new fervor.

"Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together." (Matt. xxiv. 28.) This body is pre-eminently the most beautiful, the most perfect of all bodies; this body, which paid the price of our Redemption, is in our sanctuaries, there to receive our homage; and in consequence of His presence herein, all noble souls, all good Christians, all good priests who have the clear insight of a lively faith, feel themselves attracted toward the Holy Eucharist. In them it is a sacred instinct, like that which recalls the sparrow and the turtle-dove to the

place of their rest. (Ps. lxxxiii. 4.) Strange, indeed, it would be if the Son of God, finding His delights to be among us, would find in us no desire to go and adore Him. You, His minister and His friend, go and visit Him in your name, and in the name of your people; and you whose heart is in trouble, go to Him who is the great Consoler. St. Philip Neri, St. Charles Borromeo, St. Francis Borgia, St. Francis Xavier, Olier, Alain de Solminihac, would have desired to spend their lives before the tabernacle.

Let the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice be the first object of your thoughts. This function is the great affair of the priesthood, the great hope of the Church. The angels do not become habituated to this spectacle of the Lamb of God, "ever living, ever immolated." (Apoc. v. 6.) Of St. Vincent de Paul the faithful used to say: "Oh, how well this priest says Mass." Were the angels of heaven justified in saying the same of you, they would add that you are a great saint, a saint very useful to the world.

You partake every day of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. This favor should continually feed your fervor, not be a reason to grow cold in your devotion to the Eucharist; your communions, multiplied as they are, multiply the claims of God to your gratitude.

"Jesus Christ, through the Most Holy Sacrament, wishes to fill the priests with His spirit and His grace, and through them to convert the souls of men. I, therefore, feel faint-hearted and languid, so vivid and vehement are my desires to see the Most Holy Sacrament revered by priests." (Olier.) "O God, hidden under the mysterious veils of the sacramental species! How gladly I would shed my blood to make Thee known to so many infidels who ignore Thee, to so many heretics who reject Thee, to so many worldlings who neglect Thee, to so many tepid souls who know not how to love Thee, to so many ministers of Thy altars who do not become saints though they offer the Holy Sacrifice so often." (P. Berthier.) It, however, suffices not for a priest to practise this devotion. He should also—

II. Propagate it and keep it alive. The Eucharist is a hidden treasure; of what use will it be to the faithful if we do not expatiate to them upon its richness? Let us often return to this subject in our exhortations. There are parishes in which, toward evening, a number of devout adorers are seen winding their way to the Church; in the morning a still larger number kneel around the altar at Holy Mass. Many are those who there receive communion frequently and devoutly. Blessed parishes! There they know how to appreciate the heavenly gift. They participate abundantly in the merits of the most excellent of all sacrifices

there they eat the wheat of the elect; piety reigns in such parishes. These happy results, however, are due, after God, to the good priest who has taught his people to know the meaning of the *tabernacle,* of the *altar* and *communion-table* of our churches.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Love of Jesus Christ toward the priest in the Holy Eucharist. I. He dwells in the *tabernacle.* To all, and at all times, He offers the consolation of His presence, the assistance of His power. The priests are the guardians of this magnificent treasure. They dispense it to the world. If there were no priests, there should be no Holy Eucharist. II. He immolates Himself on the *altar.* Consider the motive, the value of this immolation. Who is the minister of this sacrifice? III. He gives Himself at the *holy table.* "Take and eat, this is my body." You have My soul, My divinity. *O stupor indicibilis charitatis!* How easy to despise all the delights of earth after feasting at this banquet.

Second Point.—What Jesus expects of His ministers in the Holy Eucharist. Fidelity to practise, zeal to propagate this devotion. I. Practical devotion toward the Holy Eucharist requires three things: To visit Jesus Christ in His *tabernacle* regularly; to offer Him piously on His *altar;* to receive Him fervently at the *holy table.* "Wheresoever the body shall be, there shall the eagles also be gathered together." Go often, offer your homage and that of your people to Him who dwelleth in our sanctuaries. Let the celebration of the holy mysteries be ever the first object of your thoughts; let your fervor increase with the number of your communions; each communion you receive should intensify your gratitude to God. II. In order to propagate this devotion, you must often speak of it in the pulpit and in the confessional.

MEDITATION XCVIII.

REASONS OF CHRISTIAN AND PRIESTLY CONFIDENCE.

Whatever may be our situation, how great soever may be our dangers and sorrows, we always have two infallible motives for reliance on God—the promises of God, and our confidence in God. We are fearful only because we are weak in faith, as Our Saviour declared. "Why are you fearful, O ye men of little faith ?"

1.—*God has Pledged Himself to Refuse Nothing to Those Who have Confidence in Him.*

2.—*Apart from God's Promise, our Confidence Alone would Obtain Everything of Him.*

First Point.—God has pledged Himself to refuse nothing to confidence. However rare good faith be among men, we nevertheless consider that a promise is positive of fulfilment when it is made by an upright man, put in writing, and especially when his word and writing are confirmed by oath and by forfeitures. Who would believe that the Lord wished to bind Himself to us by so many obligations?

He promises: "Ask and you shall receive; knock and it shall be opened unto you." Whatever you will ask, if your faith be strong, you shall obtain it. "Everything is possible to him that believes." In the Holy Scripture to believe and to hope are often the same thing. Faith and hope are always the virtues to which the Saviour pays favorable attention, and He is careful to tell us this. He declares that before we pray to Him He considers our wants, provides for their relief with the affection of a father, and without His permission "not a hair shall fall from our head."

There is no doubt regarding the meaning of these declarations; do we believe in them? One would say that they were uttered by another than He who revealed to us the many incomprehensible mysteries, against which we would not dare entertain the slightest doubt. Abraham believes the word of God, and for this reason he hopes against all hope. How could Isaac, after being immolated, become the father of a numerous posterity, as God had promised? This is true indeed; but, on the other hand, can God be untrue to His promise? If Isaac were killed, a dead man would have

to be raised to life. What if a thousand dead had to be raised, if this world had to be destroyed, another to be created? One miracle alone is impossible to God, and that is, if He were to fail in His promise.

His promise, moreover, is *written.* We read it in the sacred books on which we shall be judged. Could the sacred Gospel be brought out in judgment against us before the dread tribunal, if, while testifying to our disobedience, it declared the Lord's infidelities to His promises? Those promises must, O my God, grant me all that I ask with confidence, nay all that Thou hast given me a right to expect from Thy bounty, even before asking it; for otherwise Thou wouldst not be found just and true. I possess a hand note of Thine, which secures to me all that Thou hast promised. I then have nothing to fear. And yet the Saviour gives stronger security.

We have His words confirmed by an oath: "Amen, amen I say to you, whatever you will ask the Father in My name He will grant it to you. Hitherto you have asked nothing in My name;" that is, with firmness of hope which My promise and My mediation should inspire in you. I swear by Myself, who am eternal Truth, by Myself who hate lies and punish perjury, if you cast all your solicitude on Me I will take care of you. *O nos beatos, quorum causa Deus jurat. O miserrimos, si nec Deo juranti credimus.*

There are men, indeed, who break their word, disown their writing, violate their oath, yet we have nothing to fear from the inconstancy or perfidy of such men, if they have given securities, or have given themselves as security for their promise. And Thou hast given us Thyself, O Lord! this also Thou hast condescended to do in order to obtain our confidence.

The Lord's benefits, says St. Augustine, have this double character: They are in themselves a blessing and also a pledge of new favors. He will give me favors because He has already given some to me. He threatened to destroy the murmuring Israelites, and, in order to appease Him, Moses reminds Him of the wonders He had performed in their behalf. This was enough to remind Him of the crimes of an ungrateful people, and to justify instead of appease Him; yet God's anger was appeased, God granted pardon. It is a sacrifice for the heart of a good Father to lose the sweet fruit of all that He did for the happiness of His children. I am chiefly anxious when I remember the many graces which I have received; this, on the contrary, ought to comfort me. The more Jesus Christ shed tears and blood for my sanctification, the more ardently does He desire the salvation of my soul.

Finally, I find a pledge of future favors not merely in the admirable graces that He lavished upon me in the past; this pledge of future favors is none else but Himself; for He is mine, His Father gave Him to me; He has given and continues to give Himself to me as often as I wish. When I offer Him to His Father, I present my claims to the possession of His kingdom. I can exclaim with the Psalmist, "The Lord is my refuge, and my God, the help of my hope." (Ps. xciii. 22.) Have I any cause to fear when my confidence is grounded upon His divine promise? This, however, is not all.

Second Point.--Our confidence alone, apart from God's promises, would oblige Him to help and to save us, because this confidence honors Him, and because He must respond to it.

Our confidence in God honors Him and procures for Him a glory which is dear to Him, a glory which He desires, and which He asks us to give Him. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." (Ps. xlix. 15.) This is the greatest honor that He can receive from us, for our confidence adds to His glory; it glorifies the truth of His word, the fidelity of His promises, His wisdom, which knows our wants and the way to assist us, His power, which triumphs over all difficulties. But it particularly honors His mercy, His inexhaustible tenderness, through our conviction that He continues to love us, although we have deserved His hatred. Confidence is, properly speaking, the homage of the heart; of all homages the one most worthy of God. We see the desire in all men to obtain the confidence of their fellow-beings.

Finally, God would dishonor Himself were He to permit our confidence to be deceived, for in this case it would be true to say that the goodness of God is below and not above the thoughts of men. Starting from this point, the holy Doctors teach that our hope is the measure of the graces which we receive. St. Thomas says that it is within us the principle of impetration, just as charity is the principle of merit; as we acquire merit in proportion to our love, so we obtain grace in proportion to our hope.

Let us judge of the heart of God by our own. The person who would refuse to assist a friend who applies to him with confidence, when he could help him and when the service desired is important, would be considered unworthy to bear the name of friend; and how could God, who is goodness itself, reject His child who casts himself into His arms, when there is question of preserving him from the most dreadful of misfortunes, and when His mere will suffices to save him? Ah, quite different is the idea He gives us

of His goodness when He says: "Because he has hoped in Me, I shall deliver him; because he has known My name, I shall save him."

O Jesus! how little does he know Thy name who dares not hope for everything from Thee. When assailed by despondency, turn your eyes toward Jesus Christ. Withdraw yourself into His wounded heart, and imagine that He thus addresses His Mother, who prays for you: "I have, O my Mother, many reasons to assist this afflicted good priest: thou prayest to Me for him; he has left all things to follow Me; his soul cost Me all My blood, but he has hoped in Me, and this suffices. My honor demands that I should justify his confidence. I shall deliver him from his enemies, and shall make him happy in heaven." "Because he has hoped in Me, I shall deliver him." Let others take confidence in the remembrance of a life of innocence, a life filled with good works; as for me, O my God, all my strength is in Thee, and my confidence is in Thy mercy. "In peace in the self-same I will sleep, and I will rest, for Thou, O Lord, singularly hast settled me in hope." (Ps. iv., 9, 10.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God has formally pledged Himself to refuse nothing to confidence. I. We have *His word.* It is the word of the Son of God. "Ask and you shall receive." He even declares that before we pray to Him, He watches over our wants in order to provide for them with the affection of a father. There is nothing obscure in those declarations. Do we believe in them? II. We have *His written word.* Could the sacred Gospel be brought out against me at the dread tribunal, if while testifying to my transgressions, it at the same time made known God's infidelities to His promises? III. This written promise is *confirmed by an oath.* The oath of a God! How sad our state if we do not believe even in this oath! IV. As additional sureties we have *most precious pledges.* These are the benefits already received of God; next we have God Himself; Jesus Christ, Son of God, who has given Himself to us as a pledge of the sovereign happiness which He has prepared for us.

Second Point.—Our confidence alone, apart from God's promises, would oblige Him to help and to save us. I. When we hope for everything from God, we give Him a glory which is dear to Him, and which He also demands of us. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me." Confidence is, of all homage, that most appreciated; it is the homage of the heart. II. God would dishonor Himself were He to permit us to be deceived in our confidence. Let us judge of His heart

by our own. He would be no man who would refuse to assist another applying to him with confidence, particularly if this man were his son, and if he could easily render him useful assistance. Let us meditate upon the following words: "Because He has hoped in Me, I shall deliver Him," and let us repeat joyfully, "I hope in Thee, O Lord, and therefore I cannot be confounded."

MEDITATION XCIX.

SPIRITUAL JOY.

Nothing more honors the yoke of Jesus Christ than serenity on the brow of those who bear it. Priests ought to be the faithful examples of that holy joyfulness which the Church would desire in the hearts of her children. In the very midst of the season of penance it interrupts its laments to invite us to joy. *Laetare! Gaudete!*

1.—*Nature of Spiritual Joy.*

2.—*It is Pleasing to God.*

3.—*Useful and Necessary for our Sanctification.*

First Point.—True idea of spiritual joy. St. Paul gives it to us in his Epistle to the Philippians: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men. The Lord is nigh. Be nothing solicitous, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God." (Ch. iv. 4, 5, 6.) In the above words we have the reasons for solid Christian joy. Its source is God, "in the Lord," and this accounts for its being unchangeable. The joy which comes from the gratification of passions passes away like a torrent, which is soon dried, leaving nothing behind it save slime. The joy which comes from creatures, though it may be innocent, is, to say the least, vain, superficial, and transitory. Spiritual joy, because it flows from a holy source, is the only one that can fill the heart and last forever. "Rejoice always." This joy is modest, and has nothing in common with the light and boisterous joys of worldlings, for, as St. Paul says, this joy is grounded upon our faith in the presence of God, in His power and goodness, and His fidelity to His promises; and thence comes to us confidence in God. Who can disturb us? God is everywhere; He sees all things, can do all things, desires our happiness at all times. His treasures are ours. Of the treasure of confidence He has left the

key in our hands, namely prayer, and He wishes us to put it to good use. Prayer, encouraged by the remembrance of blessings already received, obtains everything. "In everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving let your petitions be made known to God." Spiritual joy is in us a gift of the Holy Ghost, and a beginning of the participation of the joy of God Himself. "Enter into the joys of thy Lord." On earth joy falls quietly upon the souls of the elect; in heaven they are inebriated with it as with a torrent.

What, then, is the meaning of rejoicing in God? It consists in seeking all my satisfaction in Him and in His service. I rejoice in God when I rejoice in the accomplishment of His will, when I feel glad to be the servant of so good a Master, the son of so tender a Father. When I rejoice over His love for me; over the evidence He gives me of His love, the blessings I hope to receive from Him; but I rejoice in God in the most perfect manner when I delight in contemplating His infinite perfections. His absolute and supreme felicity, which no sin, however enormous, can either trouble or change. My joy in this case is the love of a child who longs to behold his father, and is happy because his father is happy.

Second Point.—Spiritual joy is pleasing to God. He has created us according to His image, and He wishes us to resemble Him as much as possible. Sadness disfigures this divine image, for God is joy as He is charity. Do we not in every page of our sacred books find urgent solicitations for sinners to return to God, and for the just, multiplied invitations to rejoice? So pleasing is our joy to God, when He is its object, that it is a certain means to obtain from Him all that we desire. "Delight in the Lord, and He will give Thee the requests of Thy heart." (Ps. xxxvi. 4.)

Joy is the fruit of justice (Gal. v. 22), and it is, therefore, the possession of a good priest. If you seek the Lord, and desire to be entirely His, you have a right to be joyful. Listen to God when He so often invites you to give yourself to rejoicing and jubilations. Believe that you praise Him worthily by the very fact that you are happy in serving Him. Of you principally, it is said, that God covers you with His wings; and would you dare to be anxious, when the prophet similarly situated was thrilled with delight? "I will rejoice under the cover of Thy wings." (Ps. lxii. 8.)

Do not say that fear also is commanded. Your fear, your sadness, and your despondency are not the fear which God demands of you. This kind of fear does not freeze the heart, since one must possess joy to obtain this salutary fear, as David has taught us: "Let my heart rejoice that it may fear Thy name." (Ps. lxxxv. 11.) The saints fear to displease God because they consider His

good will the greatest of all good, and His displeasure the greatest of all evils. Their fear has its principle in love. "The fear of the Lord is honor and glory and gladness and a crown of joy; the fear of the Lord shall delight the heart. It shall go well with him that feareth the Lord, and in the days of his end he shall be blessed." (Ecclus. 1.) If you make an offering to the Lord, do not make it with a sad heart, and, as it were, by force, for "He loveth the cheerful giver." (2 Cor. iv.) When you enter His temple to pray, let holy joy enter with you; do not cast it out of your mind, for God intends to impart gladness to you in the *house of prayer*. (Is. lvi. 7.)

Third Point.—Joy is useful and necessary for your sanctification. Let us meditate seriously upon the words: "The joyfulness of the heart is the life of the man, and a never-failing treasure of holiness." (Ecclus. xxx. 23.) Spiritual joy is, therefore, like true piety, profitable for all things, bearing promises for the present life and for the life to come.

While sadness causes the eternal ruin of many souls, spiritual joy, on the contrary, saves many. It is a rampart for the protection of innocence, or a powerful means to repair its loss. If, in the moment of *temptation*, sadness takes possession of your heart, you are wrapped up in darkness, you lose your energy, and you will succumb. The weapons you ought to use in this case would be prayer, confidence in God, mortification; but you feel no taste for prayer, confidence in God has left you, mortification has become repugnant. If, on the contrary, you possess joy which is grounded on hope, God will relieve you. He has promised it. If you have *fallen into sin*, let the hope of pardon come and restore quiet to your troubled soul, and bring you back to your God. He will restore joy, and with it salvation. As to the *accomplishment of your duties*, nothing will facilitate it so much as holy joy. We must apply to it what is said of holy love: "It feels no burden, values no labors, would willingly do more than it can, complains not of impossibility. It is able, therefore, to do anything." (1m. l. iii. 5.) Sadness vanquishes courage; the least difficulty destroys it. It causes a dislike for people, makes us discontented with ourselves and with others. It leads to two evils quite opposite, viz., to despair, or to unrestrained criminal gratifications; persons given to melancholy are more inclined than others to sensuality, precisely because they are a prey to sorrow and pain. Let us conclude that joy is not useful only, but necessary. The heart of man, says St. Gregory, can not be without enjoyment; if he finds none in virtue, he will seek for it in excesses. It must be that sadness is a great obstacle to salvation, for the Church asks for us that we be

delivered from the present sadness, and be enabled to possess eternal joy. *A praesenti liberari tristitia, et aeterna perfrui laetitia.*

O Lord, if I love Thee, I shall possess joy, and a joy unchangeable. Spiritual joy produces Thy love. Joy dilates the heart and opens it to the sweet inspirations of love. O my God, give me Thy love, give me the joy which comes from Thy love: nothing will then separate me from Thee, nor affect my happiness.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—True idea of spiritual joy. St. Paul gives it: "Brethren, rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice. Let your modesty be known to all men, the Lord is nigh." Holy joy has its source in God, in the Lord. It is on this account inexhaustible. It is modest and full of confidence because the Lord is nigh. In His presence I rejoice; hence my confidence. I rejoice in the Lord when the possession of His love fills me with joy, when I love to do His will, when I rejoice at the glory and happiness of God.

Second Point.—Our spiritual joy is pleasing to God. He has created us according to His image; this image we disfigure by our sadness, for God is joy as well as He is charity. Joy in the Lord is most pure love. It is so pleasing to God that it is a sure means of obtaining from Him whatever we desire.

Third Point.—Spiritual joy is useful and necessary for our salvation. The spirit of God has declared it. "The joyfulness of the heart is the life of man, and a never-failing treasure of holiness." If sadness take possession of your heart, you will be surrounded with gloom, you will lose your strength, you will be vanquished. The heart of man has need of enjoyment; if he does not find it in virtue, he will seek for it in excesses. Joy dilates the heart and prepares it for the sweet impressions of holy love. The Church prays that we may be delivered from present sadness, and made to possess eternal joy. *A praesenti liberari tristitia et aeterna per frui laetitia.*

MEDITATION C.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

1.—*Its Justice.*
2.—*This Virtue is Excellent and Pleasing to God.*
3.—*It Honors Us.*

First Point.—Justice requires that I should in all things conform my will to the will of God. Order and reason teach us that when a master gives his commands to his servant, it is the duty of the latter to obey them. They teach us, likewise, that truth ought to be preferred to error, wisdom to folly; that things that are perfect and immutable should have dominion over things that are vicious or possess only a transitory good. Now when I compare the two wills which should work in union, viz., the will of God and the will of man, I find that the will of God is that of the master, and my will that of the servant. He has a right to command; it is my duty to obey. When Heli, the high priest, heard Samuel announcing to him the dreadful punishments which were to fall on him for his criminal weakness, he only uttered the words: "It is the Lord, let Him do what is good in His sight." (1 Kings, iii. 18.) The same words I also should use to stifle the complaints or overcome the resistance of my will when assailed by temptation.

The will of God is infinite wisdom; mine dwells in darkness, continually liable to error. As I, therefore, submit my reason to the infallible word of God, it necessarily follows that I should submit my will to His infinite wisdom.

Finally, the will of God is righteousness and holiness. It is always perfect and unchangeable, while mine inclines to evil and inconstancy. *Stet ergo regula*, says St. Augustine, *et quod pravum est ad regulam corrigatur.* (Ps. xxxi.) What happens, however? In place of following the will of God, I would wish God to conform His will to mine. *Haec est hominibus magna et usitata perversitas, ut cum debeant ipsi vivere secundum voluntatem Dei, ipsi Deum velint vivere secundum voluntatem suam; et cum ipsi nolint corrigi, illum velint depravari.*" (Ps. xlv.)

Second Point.—Nothing more excellent or pleasing to God than conformity to His will. God has wrought on earth two unions, so marvelous that it is beyond our power to comprehend them. The first is the union of our nature with the nature of God in the person of the Word. We adore this union in Jesus

Christ. The second is the union of Mary's maternity to her unalterable virginity. "Next to those two incomparable unions," says Father Nouet, "I know not of any as excellent as the union of our will with the will of God. There is nothing so pleasing to God, nothing that renders us so much like unto His Son."

The same writer adds: "As the God-Man is, in virtue of this union, infinitely powerful, good, wise, holy, so the will of man, having become, as it were, the will of God, becomes all holy, for it is united to holiness itself; it is almighty, for it is united to God's omnipotence; it is all perfect, because it is united to the sovereign perfection." Must not God take complacency in a soul identified with Him, in a soul in which He beholds His own reflection?

It seems that He intended to express to us His pleasure at the sacrifice of our will to His, when He said: "I have found a man according to My heart. David, son of Jesse." He has found the man such as His heart desired him. It would seem as if He were searching for such a man. Finally to His great joy He has discovered him. His wish is realized, and God feels satisfied. He must congratulate Himself and speak of His good fortune.

Certain it is that this filial, entire reliance of a soul on God, that He may dispose of it at His will, is, without prejudice to its liberty, a magnificent triumph of grace over the will of man. O my God, gain this victory over Thy servant. *Ecce me totum omnesque sortes meas in manibus tuis plene et fiducialiter repono: quod tibi placitum fuerit, hoc deinceps fiat.* (Mem. vit. sac. c. xlviii.)

Third Point.—Nothing more honors me than conformity of my will in all things to the will of God. I hereby free myself from every other bondage in order to depend on Him alone whose servants are kings. I rise up to the life of the angels, to the very life of Jesus Christ, a life which is the life of God Himself.

If I strip myself of my will to adopt the will of God in everything, the angels and myself have, henceforth, but one rule, one life. "Bless the Lord, all ye His angels, you that are mighty in strength, and execute His word, hearkening to the voice of His orders. Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts, you ministers of His who do His will." (Ps. cii. 20, 21.)

I. The angels are animated by only one motive—the will of God. *God wills it.* Such is the law which they all obey: *God wills it,* and the angel will assume the direction of a nation, or the protection of a child, as ready to become the guardian of a sinner as the guardian of a saint. The sinner will be in no wise grateful for His services, and will force Him to witness thousands

of abominations; but since God wills it, the angel will lavish his care on his ward with the affection of the most tender mother for her only son. Is it not a beautiful privilege of ours to have the same occupations as those blessed spirits, and to be called to imitate their life? I can, however, rise up higher still, through conformity to the will of God.

II. It gives me an admirable resemblance to the King of angels, and an ineffable relationship with Him. For the sole purpose of conformity to the will of His Father, Jesus Christ came down from heaven to live and die on earth. He did not come of Himself. "His Father, who is living, sent Him." The will of His Father determined everything, the time, the place, the duration of His mission among men; it directed all His steps, dictated all His words, commanded all His miracles. "Those things that are pleasing to Him, I do always." (John, viii. 29.) It settled all the circumstances of His death. "You should have no power over Me, unless it had been given to thee from above." (John, xix. 11.) Before expiring He seems to consult with Himself and to ask: Have I accomplished all the commands of My Father? Yes, all is consummated; I have no more need of this mortal life. "And bowing down His head, He gave up the ghost." (John, xix. 30.) It is, therefore, through this virtue that I become the perfect imitator and image of Jesus Christ. This, however, is not all; by practising conformity to God's will, I enter His family, I become His brother; He, in a certain manner, loves me as His own Mother, for He declared: "Whosoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother, and My sister, and My mother." (Matt. xii. 90.) It was as much as to say: Mary occupied the first place in My heart solely because of all creatures she most perfectly conformed to the will of the Lord.

By willing what God wills, as He wills it, and because He wills it, I have but one food with the Saviour. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me." (John, iv. 34.) That which sustained His life sustains mine also. I am as another Jesus Christ, incarnate God conversing among men. *Qui paret Deo, efficitur, ad magistri imaginem, Deus in carne conversans.* (Clem. Alex. 7, Strom.)

It follows that while the eternal Word, in order to obey His Father in the work of our Redemption, had to descend to the lowest depths of debasement, we, on the contrary, by practising the same conformity to God's will, raise ourselves above every creature; we fly up to the heaven of the adorable Trinity, with a view to unite ourselves to God by taking His will as the rule of our actions. *Ascendit ad coelum Trinitatis, ei per conformitatem*

voluntatis inhaerendo. (St. Bonav.) By so doing we participate in two divine attributes, which seemed out of the reach of our weakness, viz.: infallibility and impeccability; for when I do the will of God I obey the direction of His sovereign wisdom. I can not go astray. I act conformably to His infinite sanctity; I can not commit sin.

Have you given all your esteem to this excellent virtue? What have you done hitherto to acquire it? What will you do henceforth?

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Justice requires that I should conform my will to the will of God. The will of God is the will of the master; mine is that of the servant. He has the right to command; my duty is to obey. The will of God is infinitely wise; mine is liable to thousands of errors. The will of God is righteous and holy and unchangeable; mine is depraved, inconstant, capable of committing every sin. How just it is, then, that I should allow myself to be guided by the will of God.

Second Point.—Nothing more excellent than to conform my will to the will of God. Next to the union of the human nature with the divine which we adore in Jesus Christ, and to the union of maternity to virginity which we venerate in Mary, there is no union more admirable than the union of our will to the will of God. It seems He wishes to show us how much it is pleasing to Him when He said: "I have found a man. . . . according to My own heart, who will do all My behests." This filial abandonment of ourselves into the hands of God is the most beautiful triumph of grace over our will, and does not interfere with our liberty.

Third Point.—Nothing honors us more than conformity in all things to the will of God. Through this virtue: I. I raise myself to the rank of the angels. With them I have a common rule, the same principle of action, the same life. II. I acquire an admirable resemblance to and a sort of relationship with Jesus Christ, the King of angels. He came down, lived, and died on earth, solely for the purpose of doing the will of His Father. Through this virtue the food of Jesus Christ is my food. I enter His family; I become His brother, His sister, His mother. I rise up to God by taking His will as the rule of mine. I participate in His infallibility and impeccability.

MEDITATION CI.

CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD—WHAT THE SOUL FINDS IN IT.

1.—*The most Perfect Sanctity.*
2.—*The most Complete Happiness.*

First Point.—Conformity to the will of God in all things is the most perfect sanctity. The will of God is sanctity itself, the rule of all sanctity; the greater my conformity to this rule, the greater my sanctity. Can we conceive of a life more perfect than the life of Jesus Christ? Conformity to the will of His Father was the very soul of His life. "I must be about the things of My Father." If, therefore, the measure of our resemblance to this adorable type of all that is perfect, be the measure of our perfection, the more we will conform to God's will, the more we will advance toward true perfection.

To practise this virtue is to practise all virtues, and to practise them through the most excellent of motives.

I. In always willing what God wills I practise all virtues. Faith, which points out God in all events, great and small, God governing everything, directing everything, with a power which nothing can resist, with unerring wisdom, with incomparable goodness. Confidence, since I abandon myself to His love, throwing myself and all my cares upon His bosom, as a child throws himself into the arms of his father. Mortification, patience, humility, for I submit to the decrees of His justice, I bless Him at all times, and accept from His hand trials and sufferings as well as consolations. The same should be said of the other virtues. I practise them all, and this I do through the most excellent of motives, that is through love, and through love the most pure.

II. Conformity to God's will is, after all, nothing but charity, in which all happiness and perfection consist. "Love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom. xiii. 10.) Now God Himself will teach us the nature of this love which He expects of us. "He who has My commandments and keepeth them, he it is who loves Me." In this matter reason teaches us as well as faith. Do we not say that two hearts are united, that the union between them is perfect when they both accept or reject the same things. *Eadem velle eadem nolle, ea demum firma amicitia est?* (St. Hier. Epist. ad Demetrium.) To love what God wills is to love Him as

He loves Himself. It is the same as saying to Him: "What have I in heaven, and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? For Thee my heart and my flesh have fainted away. Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion forever." (Ps. lxxii. 25, 26.)

The first words of St. Paul after his conversion was an act of entire resignation to the will of God. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts, ix. 6.) He says not: "Since Thou, O Lord, didst condescend to come down and reveal Thyself to me, the most unworthy of all creatures, my will is to be Thy apostle or a martyr. I will, through my labors and the shedding of my blood, show forth my gratitude for Thy wonderful goodness. I will go and bury myself in a desert, there to bewail my crimes." He says nothing of this, but only the words: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" Speak, O Lord, command; what wilt Thou that I should do? I am in Thy hands as the clay in the hands of the potter; do Thou with me what Thou wilt. *O verbum breve, sed plenum sed vivum, sed efficax, sed dignum omni acceptione!* (St. Bern., serm. I, de Conv. St. Pau.) How good to find the holiness which God requires of me in one virtue, which I can practise every moment, and which fills my soul with heavenly sweetness.

Second Point.—To conform in everything to the will of God is the most complete happiness. To be happy according to the full meaning of the word means to be free from all evil, to possess all that we desire, and in the manner we desire it. Now he can fully realize this happiness who entirely conforms his will to the will of his Maker.

The many evils which afflict us on earth may be divided into two classes. One class belongs to the moral order and by this we mean sin, with its occasions and consequences. In the other class we have natural evils, such as sickness, painful separations, persecutions, loss of wealth, of honor. We shall presently see that conformity to the will of God preserves us from all these evils.

In the matter of moral evil or sin, it is evident that sin is but a wicked preference given our own will over the will of God; hence he does not sin who always acts in conformity with God's will.

As to the evils of the second class, they are not really evils, except through their opposition to our will. If I love the labor, the fatigue, the affliction or cross which I suffer, far from it being an evil for me, I should consider it an evil to be free from them. *Passus es aliquid mali*, says St. John Chrysostom, *si velis, non est malum; gratias age, et mutatur malum in bonum.* We see, then, that the first condition for perfect happiness is really fulfilled

by the man who wills nothing save what God wills. By placing himself in the hands of Providence, a man retires into a place of refuge so high that no evil can reach him. "Thou hast made the most high Thy refuge; there shall no evil come to Thee." (Ps. xc. 9, 10.) Such also is the source of that profound peace which surpasses all understanding, of that filling up of all desires which, according to St. Augustine, is happiness itself. *Felicitas desideriorum quies.*

According to St. Paul, what constitutes the happiness of the saints in the world is not eating and drinking. It is justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Rom. xiv. 17.) Such is the anticipated inheritance of the children of God on earth. We name it beatitude because of the resemblance it gives us to the blessed in heaven. Some of their privileges consist in possessing everything in God, possessing Him, having no desire, no fear; and such is also, in a certain degree, the privilege of the soul which has attained perfect conformity to the will of God. The beatitude of this soul has become somewhat as unchangeable as the beatitude of God. Not only "Whatsoever will befall it shall not make it sad," but everything for that soul comes to pass in the proper time and manner. Leaning upon the will of the Lord, that soul ever enjoys the joy of hope. (Rom. xii. 12.) Resting upon this immovable rock, in the midst of the most violent tempests, it laughs at the fury of the waves, and challenges all the powers of hell. "When I shall be perfectly united to Thee, O my God, when all that is in me shall adhere to Thee through love and grace, I will have no suffering, no sorrow; my life shall then be full of joy, because I shall be myself full of Thee." (St. Aug. Conf., l. x., ch. 18.)

For the priest complete happiness consists in co-operating efficaciously in the happiness of his brethren. Now, this is one of the effects of the virtue which we here consider. It unites us intimately to the Saviour; the spirit which animated Him animates us; the same rule directs us, the same bread is our food. Jesus speaks, acts, suffers, and saves in us; we have all that is needed to accomplish His designs in the sanctification of souls. "He who abideth in Me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit."

The essential point in this matter, as in any other, is to reanimate our faith. Let us walk in the brightness of its light, and say to God from our hearts: Thy kingdom come, and let us give ourselves to Him that He may reign in us and over us. Let us also say: Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, agreeing to fully accomplish that will as far as it depends on us and that

God should accomplish it in things beyond our control. God will in this way be master of us, as He is of the blessed spirits in heaven. These have naught to say to the actions of God but amen, that is, *be it so;* they sing *alleluia,* viz.: God be praised for all He does.

To reflection and prayer let us add frequent acts of this holy conformity to God's will. In painful or even in unexpected events let us immediately take shelter in the adorable will of the Lord, and repeat with Jesus Christ: "Yea, Father, for so hath it seemed good in Thy sight." (Matt. xi. 26.)

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—Conformity to the will of God is the most perfect sanctity. When I always will what God wills I practise all virtues: faith, confidence, mortification, and my intention is most perfect, for this conformity is really none else but charity: "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John, xiv. 15.) To will what God wills is to love Him as He loves Himself, and as He wills us to love Him. St. Paul understood this from the first moment of his conversion: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" How sweet it is for me to find complete perfection in one virtue which I can so easily practise.

Second Point.—Conformity of my will to the will of God is the most complete happiness. Through this virtue I free myself from all evil, and obtain all good. With it no more sin, for sin is nothing but opposition to the divine will; no evil in the natural order, for a cross which I love, which is pleasing, which I desire, is not an evil but a blessing. By taking refuge in the will of God, I escape all real evils. From this source follows peace, the complement of all desires, which is happiness itself. It also makes my happiness unchangeable, almost as unchangeable as the happiness of God. "O my God, when I shall be perfectly united to Thee, I shall have neither pain nor sorrow; my life shall then be full of joy, because I myself shall be full of Thee." (St. Augustine.)

MEDITATION CII.

LOVE OF GOD—ITS MOTIVES.

1.—*God Desires Us to Love Him.*
2.—*He Deserves our Love.*
3.—*He Loves Us.*

First Point.—God desires us to love Him. The proof of this we find everywhere—in all the creatures which He made out of nothing, and which He preserves, for the sole end that He may show to us in them some rays of His beauty, of His wisdom, some traits of His power, of His goodness; and this to invite us to love Him. In the mission of Jesus Christ, who, in coming down on earth, had no intention save to bring the fire of divine charity, His sole desire is to see it kindled in all hearts. "I am come to cast fire on earth, and what will I but that it be kindled?" (Luke, xii. 49.) In the whole law: Behold its first and great commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with all thy strength and all thy mind." (Luke, x. 27.) To this commandment, and to the second, which is like unto it, all the other commandments are related. Whether they forbid us to be solicitous for the morrow, whether they command detachment and contempt of the world or of ourselves, the object of them all is to prepare the way for divine charity. "The end of the precept is charity." (1 Tim. i. 5.) In the different virtues required of us, they are all means of attaining or of preserving perfect charity. "What does the Lord thy God require of thee, but that thou fear . . . . and walk in His ways, and love Him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." (Deut. x. 12.) Nay, the fear which God requires is the fear which leads to love. "You who fear the Lord love Him." (Ecclus. ii. 10.) Faith, hope, the other virtues precede or accompany charity, which is their queen. "The greater of them is charity." The others are for time; charity lasts unto eternity. Charity never falleth away. (1 Cor. xiii.) The heart of God is the source of all the graces which we receive, they fall upon us to replenish us with His love. When He enlightens our minds and touches our hearts, it is always to induce us to love Him; the spirit of grace enters our souls only to establish therein the spirit of charity. "The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us." (Rom. v. 5.) In the whole of the Christian religion, where everything

teaches or breathes of divine love, its dogmas, its mysteries, its worship, are lessons or reasons for love; its sacrifice is the immortal monument of boundless love. The most august of its sacraments is named the Sacrament of love; its crowns are the rewards of holy love. Infinite blessings are reserved for those who accomplish this great duty, and frightful punishments for those who will not love God. "O my God, the excess of Thy rigors against the ungrateful who will not love Thee teaches me the excess of Thy love for me. It was too much to permit me to love Thee; why art Thou so good as to command it? Why dost Thou threaten me with the greatest evils if I love Thee not, as if not to love Thee were not the greatest of evils?" (St. Augustine.)

But if God wishes ardently to be loved by all men, how much more ardently does He desire the love of His priests, whom He employs to draw all hearts to Him? It is impossible to inspire love without possessing it. *Qui non ardet, non incendit.* (St. Greg.) See with what care He prepares them to love Him, and to love Him alone. From their childhood He attracts them toward His altar, separates them from the world, and from every object which might claim a share of their affection. In what does the education of clerics consist, but in a study of those heroic virtues and sacrifices which are demanded of sacerdotal charity?

Second Point.—God deserves our love. The heart of man lives by love only, and as God made it for Himself, He made it so large that He alone can fill it. For this heart, ever restless and suffering, there is need of the supreme good, until it rests finally in the center of all perfection. But what heart will not be satisfied by the infinite charms of the Almighty which faith unveils to our eyes? Who is like unto God? Who can be like unto God in greatness, in power, in wisdom, in goodness? St. Augustine, having sketched for himself the most beautiful picture of the perfections of God, ended by exclaiming: "But what is all this, O my God, my love and my glory? That is not what Thou art; we do naught but lisp when we attempt to speak of Thee!" *Nihil dicit qui de te dicit;* and then that exclamation of love which has been so oft repeated since escaped from his heart: "Too late have I known Thee, O beauty, ever ancient and ever new, too late have I loved Thee!"

O my God, my grief ought to be more bitter than that of Augustine. Augustine began to love Thee as soon as he began to know Thee. How much more guilty he who, having no plea of ignorance to offer, lived so long a time without loving Thee. The light of truth I saw nearly as soon as the light of day; from my very childhood Thou didst deign to manifest Thyself to me as the only object

worth all my affections. And yet what use did I make of my heart? On what have I fixed my affections? Too late, O Lord, have I loved Thee. *Sero te amavi.* Too late for Thy glory. How many outrages I could have saved Thee; outrages inflicted by myself or by many souls which I should have taught to obey Thy laws. Too late for my innocence. My heart would now be so pure had I loved nothing else but Thee. Too late for my happiness. How much sorrow and remorse I should have spared myself hadst Thou ever been the sole object of my love. But, by beginning to love Thee now, though at a late hour, I may hope, through Thy mercy, to save my soul. Grant pardon for all the time that I lived without loving Thee in the past; give me grace to love Thee now, to grow stronger in Thy love every day.

Third Point.—God loves us. Of all reasons, this is the most powerful, God loves me. Note the three words: God in heaven; I on earth. God, abyss of perfection and happiness; I, abyss of sorrows and miseries. God, He who is; I, nothing. And these two extremes are not only brought near each other, but united through love. And what sort of love is this? On the part of God, the most tender, the most winning, the most generous, the most constant.

I. God's love for me is most tender. Nature knows no love as tender as the love of a mother; the maternal heart is the type of tenderness. God uses this comparison to give us some idea of His love for us; but He warns us that the figure is far below the reality. "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? And if she could forget, yet will not I forget Thee." (Is. xlix. 15.) A mother carries her infant on her bosom, she comforts and caresses it; this is also what God does for us. "You shall be carried at the breast. As one whom the mother caresseth, so will I comfort you." (Ib. lxvi. 12, 13.)

II. Anticipating love. Did God wait for my love before giving me His? Where should I be had He not first loved me? "Let us, therefore, love God, because God first loved us." (1 John, iv. 19.) He loved me, not only when I did not love Him, but before I was born. The love He has for me is as eternal as the love He has for Himself. "In perpetual charity have I loved thee." Nay, He even loved me when, by my sins, I provoked Him to hate me; was it not He who at that time preserved my very existence, offered me His pardon, His friendship, His heaven?

III. Generous love. It manifests itself by sacrifices and gifts. Is it merely in words that God loves me? O stable, Calvary, altar, how eloquently you remind me of the generosity of God's heart! If I recall to mind all that God has done for me in the order of grace,

in the order of nature, all the blessings I have received from Him, which are a pledge of those He has promised; if to blessings granted to all, I add favors bestowed on me personally, will I not hear around me, in heaven and on earth, thousands of voices crying out to me that I must love so good a God, and prove to Him my love through generosity of sacrifice, purity of intention, sanctity of action!

IV. Constant love. Who will not admire the patience of God, so often unheeded, so often insulted by an unworthy creature, and continuing still to love it? What have I not done, O Lord, to oblige Thee to despise me? My life has been a sorry circle of promises and of infidelities; doing penance to-day, betraying Thee to-morrow; but my perseverance in offending Thee could not overcome Thy constancy in loving me.

It seems to me, O my God, that Thou dost now ask me the question which so much troubled the heart of Peter: "Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?" (John, xxi. 15.) Lovest thou Me at last, thou creature so much beloved, so highly privileged by thy God? What shall I do? In keeping silence, I would acknowledge that after so many reasons to love Thee I am still wanting in love. If I answer that I love Thee, will not my conscience rise up against me, and place before my eyes a whole life of indifference and of sin? I will, O my God, answer Thee as Peter did: Thou knowest that I love Thee. Thou knowest better than myself what there is in me. Thou knowest the operations of Thy grace in my heart, and the holy desires which it instils in me. Thou knowest that I love Thee. Thou knowest. I say not that Thou hadst known it heretofore, for I was without zeal for Thy glory, without charity to my neighbor, without courage to conquer myself. Now, however, O my God, Thou knowest, Thou seest that I love Thee. Thou seest it from the regret I feel for having lived so long without loving Thee with the strong, generous love which befits Thy ministers. Thou knowest from my firm determination to have no motive of action but Thy love in the future. This sacred fire is in me but a spark. Kindle it into a fire. To love Thee and to make Thee loved by others is the glory and consolation I seek to obtain. *Suscipe,* etc.

Résumé of the Meditation.

First Point.—God wishes us to love Him. The proof of this we find in all creatures. In the mission of Jesus Christ. In the law. Not only the first commandment, but all the commandments relate to this. In the different virtues which we are obliged to practice; in the graces which we receive; in the whole of the Christian religion; in the infinite blessings destined for those

who fulfil this great obligation, and the frightful punishments reserved for those who refuse to submit.

Second Point.—God deserves our love. Our hearts were made to love, and this great desire God alone can satisfy. Who, then, is as worthy of love as God? What can a man desire that he does not find in Him, since He possesses all perfections in an infinite degree? "Too late have I known Thee, O Thou beauty, ever ancient and ever new; too late have I loved Thee." Too late have I loved Thee, O Lord; too late for Thy glory, for my innocence, for my happiness.

Third Point.—God's love for us. Of all the mysteries, this is the most powerful. God, everything; I, nothing; and these two extremes intimately united through love. What sort of love is this love of God for me? The most tender. It surpasses that of a mother. It is an anticipating love. Did He wait for my heart before giving me His? He loved me before I came into existence. A generous love made evident by sacrifices and benefactions. A constant love. His constancy in loving me could not be overcome by my constancy in offending Him. I hear God saying to me: Lovest thou Me at last, thou creature so much beloved?

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